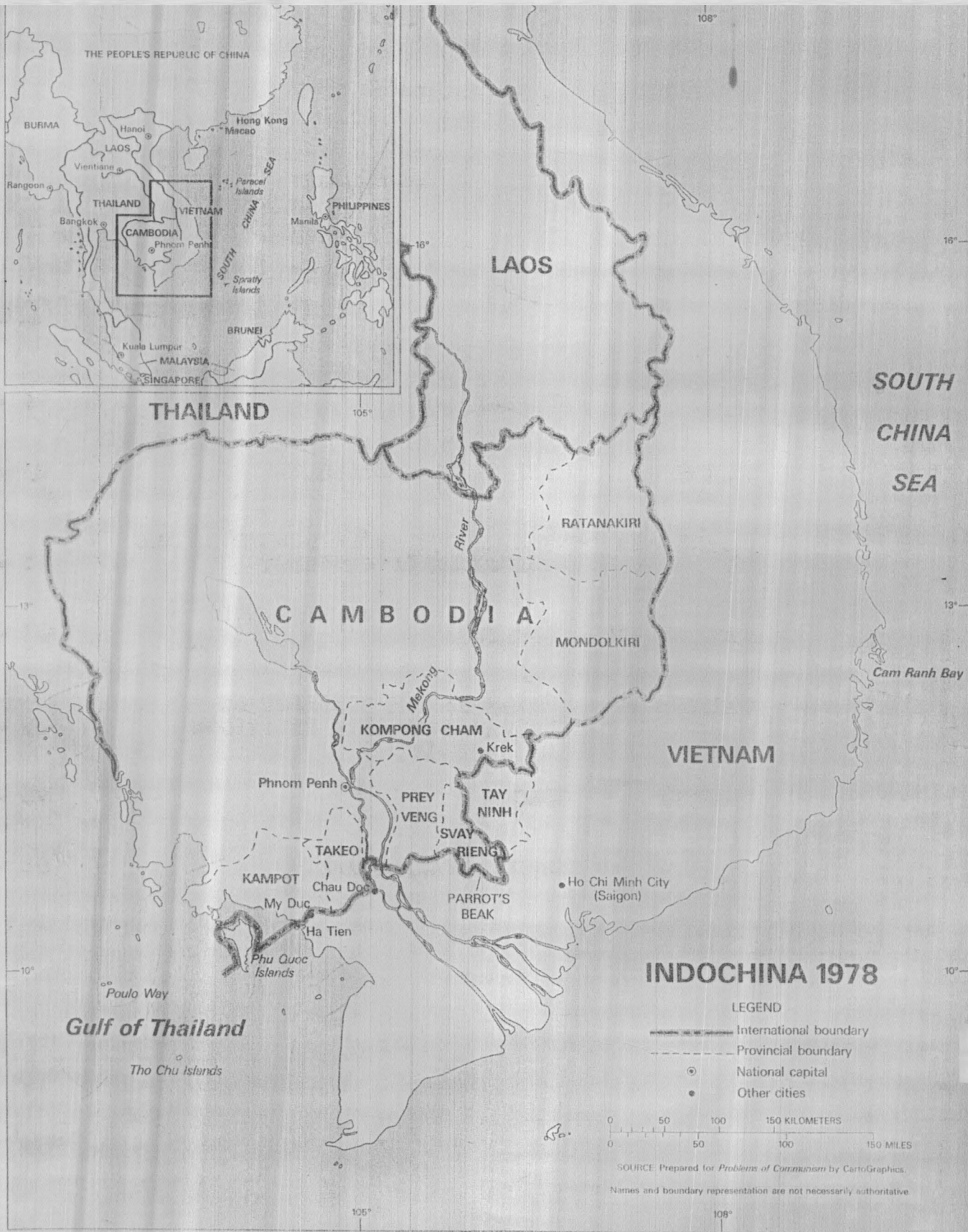


**CONFLICT ESCALATION IN INDOCHINA :  
A CASE STUDY OF  
VIETNAM—KAMPUCHEA RELATIONS (1975-80)**

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**PREFACE**

## PREFACE

The end of the Western colonial domination heralded a new era in Southeast Asia. The entire region was transformed into an experimental arena by the Great Powers. Vietnam and Kampuchea were the worst affected countries in this game of the United States, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Their policies coupled with historical rivalries between Vietnam and Kampuchea proved detrimental not only to these two Southeast Asian nations but also to the Great Powers.

However, until the withdrawal of the French and American forces <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ secured, the historical border problem between Vietnam and Kampuchea never came to the fore, in view of the overriding compulsion to free their countries from alien domination. The increasing tensions over the border question coincided with the establishment of communist governments in Vietnam and Kampuchea. The existing problem was further complicated by the backing which the now antagonistic powers, the Soviet Union and China, gave to the warring nations. And it was the extension of the rivalry between the one-time allies, to Southeast Asia, that thwarted all attempts at reconciliation and which resulted in the open confron-

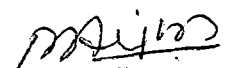
tation between Vietnam and Kampuchea in December, 1978.

The aim of the present study has been to analyse the underlying causes and to assess the impact of the policies adopted by Vietnam and Kampuchea during the period 1975-80. However, despite the non-availability of primary sources, an attempt has been made to make an in-depth analysis of the relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea, during this period with the relevant material available in the libraries of New Delhi.

Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to express my heart-felt gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. Parimal Kumar Das, for the invaluable guidance which he untiringly gave in the course of this work. His critical approach to the study of problem has provided me with a new tool for future research. At the same time, his constant encouragement injected into me the impetus that was necessary for the successful completion of this study. I am also thankful to Prof. Vishal Singh for his parent-like guidance and to Mr. Mahaviro, for whose teaching of the Thai language, I have only praises. My thanks are also due to Salam, R.V. and Tom for their assistance at various stages.

Finally, I would be guilty of breach of duty if I fail to acknowledge Pinni, my Aunt and my Mother whose blessing hands were always above me.

NEW DELHI,  
30.12.82.

  
- B. NAGARJUN

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



## CHAPTER - I

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea was a result of the lack of understanding of the concept of sovereignty in the modern sense of the term. As the countries evolved into independent modern states, so did the controversy over the borders arise. This was because even the strongest and <sup>most</sup> powerful empires of the Indochina region in the past <sup>had</sup> failed to exercise total sovereignty over the region, at any given time. In other words, the concept of 'dual sovereignty' was not uncommon in the Southeast Asian History.<sup>1</sup> This has been more so in the Vietnam-Kampuchea context.

Though the immediate causes of the conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea date back to the mid-twentieth century, the roots of it are deeply embedded in the history of the region. Thus, a study of relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea during 1975-80, is inextricably linked with the history. The history of Indo-

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1. B.K. Gordon, Dimensions of Conflict in Southeast Asia (New Jersey, 1960), p.5.

china, from time immemorial, is a history of conflicting cultures and interests. This is evident from the different political, social and cultural values and ideas the peoples of the region cultivated and nurtured. It "is indeed marked by an astonishing diversity in all fields of human activity, diversity in language, religion and culture, diversity in economic, social and political organisations, diversity so copious it scarcely needs illustration".<sup>2</sup> It is rather interesting to note that the countries of the region fall back upon their history<sup>3</sup> in order to seek justifications for their actions. This was very aptly brought out by Fred R. Von der Mehden when he stated that "the contemporary international politics of Southeast Asia cannot be understood without noting pre-colonial anti-pathies between Burmese and Thais, Cambodians and Vietnamese, Vietnamese and Chinese".<sup>3</sup> The fact that Vietnam and Kampuchea pride upon their history<sup>4</sup> is well illustrated by the powerful empires and kingdoms which existed in the region. This is substantiated even more by their respective claims over the border after the 1954 Geneva declaration.<sup>4</sup>

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2. Nicholas Tarling, A Concise History of Southeast Asia (New York, 1966), p.xi.

3. Fred R. Von der Mehden, Southeast Asia 1930-70. The Legacy of Colonialism and Nationalism (London, 1974), p.8.

4. Gordon, n.1, pp.46-53.

The conflict during 1975-80, which basically has been of divergent cultural, social, economic and political organisations, is a logical culmination of the events that occurred over the centuries. History of the region goes to prove that the socio-cultural mosaic never allowed any controversy to be amicably resolved. Even the evolution of Vietnam and Kampuchea into two distinct political and geographical entities has been a result of the influence of two contrasting cultures which dominated the Indochinese peninsula for centuries.<sup>5</sup> If Kampuchea was influenced by the Indian cultural and social norms, the Chinese left an 'ineradicable impression' on the Vietnamese way of life.

The dawn of history found the natives of Indochina living in a tribal existence. By and large they belong to Malay stock. The natives belonged to three different tribes, namely, Khmers, Annamites and the Chams.<sup>6</sup> As a result of this, war became a constant feature of this region. What had historically been a conflict between three kingdoms (the Khmer, Annam and the Champa) was reduced to a conflict between two states during 1975-80.

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5. DGE Hall, History of Southeast Asia (London, 1964), p.4.

6. Ibid., p.10.

Historically, the Cambodian civilisation is associated with the Funanese kingdom, which reigned supreme between the first and the sixth century A.D. The territory of this kingdom stretched over the southern Cambodia and Cochin-China of modern times.<sup>7</sup> It was during this period the country of Cham tribes came into existence with the South of modern Hue as its centre.<sup>8</sup> They started expanding their territory towards the north at the cost of 'more primitive tribes'. The Vietnamese on the other hand were subjected to the Chinese colonial rule from 111 B.C. till 939 A.D. The Vietnamese territory could be liberated only in 939 A.D. by Ngo Gyuen who started expanding towards the South. This territorial expansion continued for over four centuries and by the mid-fourteenth century the power of the kingdom of Champa virtually disappeared. Earlier to their decline, the Chams were involved in intermittent warfare with the Angkor kingdom. This was founded by Jaysvarman-II in the ninth century, and remained a centre of power and wealth in the region for over four centuries before it disintegrated. Thus we find three different empires in the peninsula constantly at war, each in order to establish supremacy over the other two.<sup>9</sup> It is

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7. Ibid., p.32. See also John F. Cady, Southeast Asia, Its Historical Development (Mcgraw Hill Inc. 1964), pp.15-16.

8. Ibid., p.28.

9. For a detailed explanation, see, D.G.L. Hall, n.5, Chapters II, V, VIII, IX and John F. Cady, n.7, Chapters III and V.

at this juncture, an examination of the social and cultural aspects of the then States becomes unavoidable, because the legacies of the Socio-Cultural patterns have had an everlasting effect on the region.

As already mentioned, the Chinese and the Indian cultures influenced the natives to such an extent that the Society, in certain respects was entirely based on patterns of the above stated cultures. Though the states of Southeast Asia were influenced by the Indian culture (Hinduism and Buddhism) they, "never completely dominated where indigenous cultural vitality was strong as in Java or Cambodia".<sup>10</sup> The natives adapted themselves to a religion, which was a blend of Hinduism, Buddhism and animism. Thus preserving the 'animistic and ancestral cults'.<sup>11</sup> This is one of the main reasons for Hindu culture, not permeating to the lower echelons of the Khmer and Cham societies. In other words, this cultural influence was limited to the court civilisation. But the society has preserved the old customs 'under a veneer of indianisation'.<sup>12</sup> The transmitters of Indian culture, unlike their Chinese counterparts, never forced the natives to adopt the socio-cultural patterns. The con-

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10. Cady, n.7, p.45.

11. Ibid., p.46.

12. Ibid.

tacts were confined to 'the Royal palaces and ports'. It was the prince or the 'port patricien' who took 'the initiative in appropriating Indian culture'.<sup>13</sup> That is why, we find, the natives rejecting certain aspects which were not self-explanatory.

The Vietnamese, on the other hand, were under the control of the Chinese from 111 B.C. to 939 A.D. This uninterrupted control of the Chinese over the Vietnamese earned them the name 'Annam', which meant 'the pacified South'. It was not until Nguyen who led the Vietnamese, could the Vietnamese free themselves from the clutches of the Chinese rule. This was possible because the T'ang dynasty in China gradually lost control over the southern territory. Thus "the emancipation of Nam Viet (or Vietnam) from its thousand years incorporation in China began during the last decade of the ninth century."<sup>14</sup> Despite the fact that they earned freedom, Vietnam was 'in no sense a center of prosperity and culture'. A Chinese observer as early as 990 A.D., described the Vietnamese king, "a barefoot fisherman fastripping rice balls in his fingers and snapping them into his mouth".<sup>15</sup> The

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13. Van leur, Indonesian Trade and Society (Hague, 1955), pp.66-68.

14. Cady, n.67, p.103.

15. Ibid., p.103.

Chinese contempt for the Vietnamese and vice-versa, has been a 'persistent theme in Vietnam's history.' "The long period of direct Chinese rule extending over a millenium accounts for the sinicisation of the Vietnamese".<sup>16</sup> But it is interesting to note that despite the Chinese rule for over 1,000 years, the Vietnamese at every point of time refused to accept this fact, and succeeded in maintaining a distinct identity.<sup>17</sup> Though the society absorbed the values and cultures of the Chinese in each and every sphere of their lives, their primary objective was to remain a separate political entity.

The emergence of Vietnam as an independent state in the Indochina peninsula during the tenth century, marked the beginning of an unending conflict between the states belonging to that region. The struggle of one state to establish supremacy over the other and the idea of a unified Vietnam, were the two main forces acting in the region. Historically, it was a conflict between the Khmers and Chams, Annamites and Chams and the Khmers and the Annamites. Except for a brief period

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16. Sardesai, Southeast Asia Past and Present (New Delhi, 1981), p.39.

17. Joseph Bultinger, "Vietnam: A Political History (New York, 1958), p.29.

of four decades (1042-1050 A.D.), the relations between these three states were never cordial.<sup>18</sup> The Khmer empire which reigned supreme during the first half of the ninth-century, lost control over its Southeast region in which the Chams encouraged revolts. These revolts which started during Udayadityavarman's II rule (1050-66) continued till 1080 A.D. Harshavarman III, failed to prevent a major Cham invasion. This resulted in the loss of Sambhupura, a city on the Mekong, near the modern town of Kracheh.<sup>19</sup>

It was not until the reign of Suryavarman II (1113-50 A.D.),<sup>that</sup> the Khmer empire regained its lost supremacy. His primary objective was to establish an unchallengeable authority of the Khmers. He reduced the Champa kingdom to a vassal state, when they refused to cooperate with him in his attempts to overrun the Annamites. The Chams despite the fact that they lost three northern provinces to Vietnam, as early as 1069 A.D., retaliated with the objective of wiping out the 'stigma of khmer overlordship'.<sup>20</sup> The border skirmishes began in 1167 A.D. After a decade of war, the Chams succeeded in

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18. Encyclopaedia Britannica, p.681.

19. Ibid., p.681. See also Hall, n.5, p.107.

20. Ibid.



inflicting a humiliating defeat over the Khmers. In 1177 Angkor was captured.<sup>21</sup> There was a total anarchy after the conquest of Angkor by the Chams. "The period of his (Suryavarman's II) death, to the accession of Jayavarman VII is very obscure".<sup>22</sup> It was during his reign<sup>that</sup> the entire Khmer kingdom was revitalised. He 'repaid in full the injuries and humiliation caused to the khmers by the Chams after 1181 A.D.' His policy was aimed at the conquest of Champa. He routed Champa in a great naval battle and sacked the capital of Vijaya. The kingdom remained under the Khmer tutelege for about two decades (1203-1220 A.D.). We are given to understand that Cambodia's suzerainty extended as<sup>far as</sup> Viengkhiang (Vientiane) in the north under Jayavarman VII.<sup>23</sup> His diplomatic manoeuvres also helped the Khmers in establishing a firm hold over the region. After the occupation of Champa, all his efforts were directed towards the attacks on Annam.<sup>24</sup> Jayavarman VII not only established himself as a great king and conqueror, but also as a great builder. ☹ ☹ During his reign, the Angkor Thom was built, and it was around this, that the Angkor civilisation prospered. There has, till now been, no

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21. Ibid., p.111.

22. Ibid., p.110.

23. Ibid., p.112.

24. Ibid.

(D) single opinion regarding the date of his death, but with the death of Jayavarman VII began the decline of the Khmer empire.

The events after the death of Jayavarman VII and till the evacuation of Angkor (after the Thai's victory), are not well recorded. But history proves the fact that the Khmer empire started declining during the middle ages. The abandonment of Angkor, was followed by incessant warfare for about a century and half. Barom Rachea's IV (1603-18) ascendance to the throne marked the beginning of the Cambodian subjection to the Vietnamese and the Thai influence. If Barom Rachea IV ascended the throne with the help of the Thais, his successor Chey Chetta II (1618-28) declared Cambodia's independence from the Thais and married a Vietnamese Princess. He also allowed Vietnamese settlements in modern Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh city, which till then had been a Cambodian territory.<sup>25</sup> From then onwards Cambodia was reduced to a vassal state and "during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, for instance, nine kings, five of whom reigned more than once occupied the throne, often for only a few months."<sup>26</sup>

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25. n.18, p.681.

26. Malcolm Caldwell, and Len Tak, Cambodia in the Southeast Asian War, (New York, 1973), p.4.

As early as 1760, the occupation of the lower Mekong Delta by the Vietnamese was complete. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and helped in the ascendance of a Queen to its throne, who was a puppet in their hands.<sup>27</sup> It was during this period that the Vietnamese 'worked to eliminate Cambodia's distinctive identity' by imposing upon them their customs and administrative patterns'. It was at this point that the Cambodians again sought the Thai help, in order to overthrow the puppet regime. Hence, "viewed in an historical perspective, Cambodia had been a long term loser in an unequal contest over the centuries as the Vietnamese in the east and the Thais in the west had eaten away its territories of the once powerful Cambodian empire that flourished in Angkorian times".<sup>28</sup>

The loss of territory in the Cambodian history has had its own logic, because, as already mentioned, the Angkor empire never really exercised total sovereignty over its territory. This had its own practical implications which led no less a person than Prince Sihanouk

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27. Milton Osborne, Before Kampuchea A Prelude to Tragedy (Sydney, 1979), p. 163.

28. Ibid., p. 164.

to 'stigmatise' the Vietnamese as 'hereditary enemies'.<sup>29</sup> According to Gordon, the "States and empires in South east Asian history seldom embodied the territorial implications of sovereignty that developed in the west".<sup>30</sup> This contention, coupled with the colonial experiences of the region, would be examined in this study of relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea during 1975-80.

The discovery of sea routes by the Europeans, coupled with the expansion of Trade and religious activity heralded a new era in the Asian continent.<sup>31</sup> The trade prospects in the east and far east, led the European powers to establish their hold over Asia by the mid-nineteenth century. Indochina was no exception to it. Initially, the French who established a firm control over the region by the end of the nineteenth century, were more interested in improving trade relations with China. But later on, Indochina became a prestigious possession of the French colonial empire. The region which was already conflict-ridden provided France to intervene, effectively, and annex Cochinchina and subsequently Tonkin and Annam.<sup>32</sup>

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29. Ibid.

30. B.K. Gordon, n.1, pp.5-6.

31. Jam Pluvier, Southeast Asia From Colonialism to Independence, (Kuala Lumpur, 1974), p.4.

32. R.E.M. Irving, The First Indochina War, (London, 1975), p.9.

More often, it is given to understand that the annexation of these three provinces halted with the disintegration and division of Cambodia between the Thais and the Vietnamese. But one would like to state, that this process only helped in increasing the hostilities between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians. This was a result of the lack of awareness of "the historical and cultural background of the subject peoples or the conditions under which they were living".<sup>33</sup> The French colonial administration followed the most 'inflexible policy' compared to other powers like Britain, Netherlands, Spain and the United States.<sup>34</sup> The policy of assimilation formulated by the French administration, "almost exclusively guided by the French concepts and norms, cultural political and economic"<sup>35</sup> was ruthlessly followed. In other words, there was a superimposition of alien norms and culture over the indigenous culture. The administrative practices of the French, increased the hostilities between the Kampucheans and Vietnamese. While viewing Vietnamese as an 'intelligent and industrious race, the French considered the Cambodians as

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33. Jan Pluvier, n.31, p.4.

34. Ibid., pp.4-5.

35. Ibid., p.8. See also Irving, n.32, pp.8-10.

'feckless, tawdry' and 'who had fallen from their antique splendour'.<sup>36</sup> This impression of the French (about the Cambodians) prompted them to recruit the Vietnamese for administrative purposes in Cambodia and Laos. Moreover, "only with major Vietnamese settlements, the French judged, could Cambodia become economically productive".<sup>37</sup> In doing so, the French never realised the far reaching implications of the Vietnamese settlements in Cambodia.

The dawn of the twentieth century, "amplified the problems created by geography and history in the South-east Asian area".<sup>38</sup> The first and second Indochina wars shaped the destiny of the countries to a very large extent. The new independent political structures, which emerged, could not grapple with the problems posed by the geographical and cultural divisions. As the "countries emerged from a colonial status without well defined territories", they had to turn "back to history myth and legend".<sup>39</sup> The Second World War too had a shattering impact on the region and colonial powers.

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36. Milton Osborne, n.27, p.167.

37. Ibid., pp.167-68.

38. Nicholas Farling, n.2, p.7.

39. Kieth Buchman, "Introduction to Physical, Social and Economic Geography of Southeast Asia", The Far East and Australasia 1975-76: A Survey and Directory of Asia and Pacific (Europa Publications Ltd.), pp.391-92.

The Japanese occupation of almost the entire Southeast Asian region transformed the nature of politics in the Southeast Asian countries. But the impact of the Japanese occupation differed from region to region. For instance, "in Indonesia and Indochina, the Japanese did not establish an ostensibly independent government as they did in Burma and the Philippines".<sup>40</sup> After having occupied the Hainan and Spratly islands, Japan put forward its demands before the French Governor General Jean Decoux. These demands included "the right to free movement of Japanese troops in Indochina and the use of available economic and military resources there to serve Japan's war needs".<sup>41</sup> Though all these demands were conceded, Japan, "for its own reasons allowed France to retain its nominal sovereignty over Indochina".<sup>42</sup> This atti-

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40. Colbert, Evelyn., Southeast Asia in International Politics, 1941-1956 (Ithaca and London, 1977), p.56.

41. Reddi, V.K., A History of the Cambodian Independence Movement, 1863-1955 (Tirupati, 1970), pp.71-72.

42. Ibid., p.72.

tude of France towards the Japanese exposed its weakness. By 1941, all the Indochinese states were reduced to the status of "sub-protégés" of the Japanese. Having retained the nominal sovereignty, France evolved a counter-strategy to check Japan's appeal. Emphasis was placed on history and tradition, and more Indochinese were admitted to the schools and administration. Admiral Decoux organised a youth movement and introduced paramilitary training.<sup>43</sup> But this period also witnessed the loss of one-third of Cambodian territory to Thailand. The provinces of Battambang, Sisophon and a part of Siemreap, were ceded by France.

By the end of 1944, Japan realised that 'she was fighting a losing battle'. And by March, 1945, its only objective "was to consolidate by whatever means was possible what she had already gained, and if that was not possible to deprive the allied forces of a smooth entry into the colonial countries of Asia".<sup>44</sup> In a series of manoeuvres, Vietnam and Cambodia, under the pressure of Japanese, proclaimed themselves to be independent, on 2nd September, 1945, and 13 March, 1945 respectively.

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43. Colbert, n.40, p.57. See also, Bernard Fall, Two Vietnams (2nd edn., New York, 1967), p.48.

44. Reddi, n.41, p.87.



The Japanese occupation of the region had touched all the aspects of life of the people. Like any other military power, Japan diverted all the resources of the region to subserve its war demands. The strategy of the French nurtured deep nationalistic feelings among the natives. This strategy, coupled with the taste of partial independence under the Japanese, led to the rise of strong nationalist and anti-colonial movements in Indochina.

The period immediately after the war witnessed the French trying to re-establish their hold over the Indochinese countries. The declaration of independence by the Vietnamese on 2 September, 1945, came as a major blow to France. In the years that followed, Laniel (Minister responsible for Indochina between 1949-53 and High Commissioner of France in Indochina) decided to build a Vietnamese national army in order to fight the communists who had already proclaimed their independence by then. This was to be done with the United States' financial assistance.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the region "came to be a vital region in the struggle between the communists and western forces of the world"<sup>46</sup> by the end of the Second World War. This was the beginning of

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45. R.E.E. Irving, n.32, p.98.

46. Russell H. Fifield, Diplomacy of Southeast Asia 1945-58 (New York, 1958), p.1.

the involvement of the United States. The Truman administration started helping the French through financial assistance. The real motive of the United States was to gain the confidence of France to support the US defence plans in Europe.<sup>47</sup> Thus the withdrawal of France, and the United States' interference in the region gave a new dimension to the conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea. The U.S. diverted its attention from Europe to Asia by 1949, and Laos, Cambodia, South Vietnam, South Korea and Taiwan became the beneficiaries of the economic assistance provided by them.<sup>48</sup> After 1954, it was a struggle between the communists and the anti-communists in Vietnam. But Cambodia emphasised on 'neutrality'. This resulted only in intensifying and reinforcing its traditional disagreement over border question. This led Cambodia into direct and daily involvement in war.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the Cambodian approach to the border question was "influenced by the pre-colonial and the colonial era history and the diplomatic positions on frontiers that was developed and refined by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and his foreign policy advisers from 1953-70".<sup>50</sup>

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47. Theodore Deaper, "Ghosts of Vietnam", Mainstream p.14, 27 October, 1979. See also, R.E.M. Irving, n.32, p.98.

48. Malcolm Caldwell, and Len Jak, n.26, p.75.

49. B.K. Garden, n.1, p.42.

50. Stephen P. Heider, "The Kampuchean-Vietnamese Conflict", Southeast Asian Affairs (Singapore, 1979), p.158.

The period between 1950-75 witnessed the intervention of the external powers in the region and it was subjected "to decisions in vital matters from distant metropolitan capitals", and "Southeast Asia became a theater of operations".<sup>51</sup> The resource-rich nations' socio-economic fabric was mercilessly destroyed. In fact, "never before has a materially overwhelming and technically sophisticated military strength of a major industrial power systematically sought to destroy the very basis of economic, social and cultural life of poor and largely peasant countries in the manner attempted in Indochina".<sup>52</sup> Thus, the entire region was transformed into a region of turmoil, by the roles played by the great powers of the world. It should be noted at this juncture, that the evolution of the independent states in the region was also different from one another. It was not only the conflicting cultures and socio-economic situations, but also the difference in the colonial experiences and evolution of political structures that led to the increase in hostilities between Vietnam and Kampuchea during 1975-80. In other words, two different

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51. Russel H. Fifield, n.46, p.1.

52. Keith, Buchnan, n.39, pp.391-93.

models of revolution and two different views of the world situation and "conflicting interests between two movements originating in different historical eras and operating in different socio-economic and political setting" were the factors which led the peninsula into the quagmire.<sup>53</sup>

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53. Stephen, P. Heider, n.50, p.157.

ROLE OF THE MAJOR POWERS IN THE ESCALATION OF THE  
CONFLICT

CHAPTER - II



ROLE OF THE MAJOR POWERS IN THE ESCALATION OF THE  
CONFLICT

The escalation of conflict in Indochina during 1975-80 is not only linked with the kind of relations maintained by Vietnam and Kampuchea between themselves, but also is a consequence of the roles played by the major powers of the world in the years preceeding. This part of the world has been and still is a happy hunting ground for the world powers. In fact, <sup>1</sup>in the twentieth century, no people have suffered so much, for so long and for so little as have the Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians.<sup>1</sup> The entire region was subjected to the whims and fancies of either the United States (U.S.) or the People's Republic of China or the U.S.S.R. Indochinese peninsula, thus in the third-quarter of the twentieth century was transformed into an arena for, "the most unambiguous form of great power competition".<sup>2</sup> Earlier, the shattering impact of the Second World War on the region, unleashed a chain of events in which the countries drifted away.

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1. Pandey, B.M., South and Southeast Asia, 1945-79 (London, 1980), p.7.
  2. Chin Kin Bah, "The Great Powers and Southeast Asia, A Year of Diplomatic Effervescence", Southeast Asian Affairs (ISEAS, Singapore, 1977), p.51.



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For an analysis of the roles played by the major powers, a brief examination of the events in the region between 1941-54 and between 1954-75 becomes necessary. One cannot overlook the changes brought about in the region after the Japanese literally ran over the entire region during the Second World War. It has been very aptly put across that the changes brought by the war in the region were fundamental.<sup>3</sup> This led to a change in the perception of the region's importance by the major powers. Though the French came out on the winning side in the war, its desire to regain its lost prestige became the factor which led almost each and every power of the world into what has been termed a 'quagmire'. During 1941-45, Ho Chi Minh succeeded in persuading the U.S. office of Strategic Services in aiding anti-Japanese movements. Thus marking the beginning of the U.S. involvement in the region.<sup>4</sup> Initially, President Roosevelt was convinced that the French rule over Indochina was a miserable failure. Both Stalin and Roosevelt agreed at the Tehran conference, 1943, that Indochina should be placed under a

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3. Milton Osborne, Southeast Asia: An Introductory History (London, 1979), p.137.

4. K.E.M. Irving, The First Indochina War (London, 1975), p.98.

trusteeship.<sup>5</sup> But had to abandon the idea on the advice of Winston Churchill in the larger interest of the allied unity.<sup>6</sup>

The Japanese surrender to the Chinese on to the north of the 16th parallel and to the British on to the south at the end of war gave the Vietminh which was in effective control of the region by then, an opportunity to declare itself as an independent country. This was facilitated by the late arrival of the allied troops.<sup>7</sup> The Japanese surrender in 1945 not only heralded a new era into the Vietnamese history but also witnessed a series of attempts by the French to rebuild its colonial empire. The U.S. which initially was disinterested in aiding France to regain its supremacy, had to comply with its (France's) requests. This was done in order to protect U.S. security interests in Europe, immediately after the war.<sup>8</sup> By then it was quite obvious that Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh was moving into the communist sphere of influence. This was confirmed by Dean Acheson's cable to the State Department which in effect stated that the "communist dominated and Moscow oriented Indochina" would be affecting the U.S. interests.<sup>9</sup> From

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5. For a detailed explanation, see, Melvyn Curtov's, The First Vietnam Crisis, Chinese Communist Strategy and U.S. Involvement (New York, 1967), p.21.

6. Walli, R.L. Long Road to Freedom (New Delhi, 1976) pp.26-27.

7. Hamner, Ellen J. The Struggle for Indochina (California, 1954), p.116.

8. Irving, n.4, p.98. 9. Ibid., p.99.



that point of time onwards, the U.S. was too preoccupied with its fight against communism, on the basis of National Security Council Draft in December, 1949. This draft was later to be known as the domino theory. It clearly stated that with China too accepting communism, Southeast Asia would also be swept by it, which in its turn would have repercussion all over the world.<sup>10</sup> The Korean war and the recognition of Bao Lai in 1950 by the U.S. and its apprehension over China's role in the region, became the foundation of the U.S. policy towards Indochina. Not only this, but a "shrewd piece of political blackmail" which the French resorted to by stating that it would withdraw from the region if the U.S. did not help them in fighting the communists, left the U.S. with no other option but to aid France.<sup>11</sup> Starting from this point of time in 1950s all the Presidents and Secretaries of State developed a strategic concept of the U.S. interests in Southeast Asia.

It is quite interesting to note that during the 1950s and 60s, all the major powers paid more attention to the events in Vietnam than on any other event in the Indochina region. The roles of the USSR and the PRC

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10. As quoted by Irving, n.4, p.99, from U.S.-Vietnam Relations by (Washington, U.S. Government Office), vol.8, p.267 (Pentagon Papers, 1945-67).

11. Ibid., n.4, p.100, from Geoffrey Werner, The U.S. and Vietnam, International Affairs, July 1972.

during 1949 and 1954 cannot be dealt separately. After the Geneva Conference of 1954, till the rift between the two communist countries, there had been a convergence of interests of the PRC and the USSR, in the region. The USSR's role, initially had been rather insignificant.

The 'geographical propinquity' of China influenced its policy towards the Indochinese countries. The PRC by its emphasis on revolutionary objectives in international affairs, started supporting the cause of the Vietnamese since 1949.<sup>12</sup> Strangely, while Vietnam was full of revolutionary activities during this period, Cambodia was in a state of tranquility. This was due to Prince Norodom Sihanouk's emphasis on 'neutrality'.

As already mentioned, the British (initially) and the U.S., at a later stage, assisted the French in trying to regain its colonial territory. The Chinese on the other hand, assisted the Vietminh to gain firm control over the northern region. During this period, the USSR had a marginal interest in the region. This was despite the fact that the Vietnamese communist leaders drew inspiration from the Bolshevik revolution. The Soviet Union appeared to be less concerned about the outcome of the Independence struggles in Indochina.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Edwin W. Martin, Southeast Asia and China (Boulder, 1977), pp.3-5.

13. McLane, Charles, B. Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia (Princeton, N.J. 1966), p.277. See also Colbert Evelyn, Southeast Asia in International Politics 1945-56, (Ithaca & London, 1977), p.151.

Thus, we notice, though Vietnam became independent in 1945, it did not occupy any significant position in the Soviet Union's world view. On the other hand, China's formulation of an Indochinese policy had always mainly been a function of its relations with the Super Powers<sup>14</sup> "The history of People's Republic of China's international relations can perhaps be best understood in terms of several distinctive periods identified on the basis of changing Chinese relations with the Super Powers".<sup>15</sup>

It was not until the Geneva Conference on Indochina question, the motives behind the formulations became clear. The U.S. had by then been involved in Vietnam, in a manner, which was to shape, the 'course of world history'.<sup>16</sup> John Foster Dulles' statement goes to prove this fact before Eisenhower's administration committed itself in Indochina. He stated, "there is a civil war in which we have, for better or worse, involved our prestige. Since that is so we must help the government we back. Its defeat coming after the reverses suffered by the national government of China

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14. Peter Van Ness, "The PRC and Southeast Asia," Asian Perspective, Fall, 1977, vol.1, no.2, p.127.

15. Ibid., p.130.

16. Gabriel Kolko, The Roots of American Foreign Policy (Boston, Mass. 1969), p.91.

would have further serious repercussions on the whole situation in Asia and the Pacific. It would make even more people in the East feel that friendship with the United States is a liability rather than an asset".<sup>17</sup> This was the logic behind the U.S. participation in the Geneva Conference of 1954. The representatives of the U.S., Saigon and Cambodia, maintained their anti-communist postures, right through the meeting. The outcome was that of an accommodation of interests of the five major powers present, the U.S., USSR, France, Britain and China. The countries of the region, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos had no other option but to accept the proposals made at the conference. These were the division of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel and peaceful unification through elections. "The Pathet Lao accepted coalition in the Royal Lao government. The Cambodian left, for its part saw sufficient prospects in constitutional political struggle in the post-Geneva period to reduce the need for immediate intransigence in preserving what had been won in armed struggle in alliance with the Vietminh".<sup>18</sup> An analysis of the roles of the USSR and the PRC, would reveal, that both the countries tacitly supported the division of Vietnam "In order to suit their global

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17. Dulles, as quoted by Melvyn Curtov, n.5, p.25.

18. Malcolm, Caldwell., and Len Tak, Cambodia in Southeast Asian War (M.R.P.N.Y. and London, 1973), p.90.

interests at that time and to avoid intensification of international conflict"<sup>19</sup> both the Soviet Union and the PRC evolved this strategy. It is interesting to note that "at a period when the role of Moscow as the leader of the communist countries was much clearer, the policy of avoiding overt struggle in the pursuit of revolutionary aims was in the ascendant".<sup>20</sup> China on its part supported the U.S.S.R. as it needed the Soviet Union's assistance in their task of socialist reconstruction.<sup>21</sup>

Indochina after the 1954 Geneva Conference became a crucial and strategic region for the major powers. In a sharply polarised world of the fifties and sixties, the natives of the region became pawns in the designs of these powers. The legacies of American intervention during the Indochina war were carried forward by the PRC during the years 1975-80. Immediately after the Geneva agreement, the U.S. started wooing its allies in the Southeast Asian region and succeeded in inducing them to sign the agreement on Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation in

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19. Girling, J.L.S. Politics in Southeast Asia, A Year of Conflict, Southeast Asian Affairs, (ISEAS, Singapore, 1979), p.8.

20. Milton Osborne, Region of Revolt, Focus on Southeast Asia (Harmondsworth, 1971), p.117.

21. Ibid., p.118.

1954. The USSR, on the other hand, while regarding China as its ally, formulated its policy on the basis of the decisions taken at the twentieth congress of the Communist party, in 1956. This policy has been a policy of involvement without commitment.<sup>22</sup> It never on its own initiated a policy without taking into cognisance the internal situation of the region. That the Soviet Union did not sever its relations with the Lon Nol government and that it waited till its expulsion by the Khmer Rouge goes to prove this fact.<sup>23</sup> The differences between the USSR and PRC also, weighed heavily on the evolution of a Soviet policy toward Indochina. As early as 1963, Ho Chi Minh annoyed the Soviet Union by siding with China over the Partial Test-Ban Treaty question. Again in 1964, after the Gulf of Tonkin incident neither the Soviet Union nor the PRC came to North Vietnam's rescue.<sup>24</sup> But China's policy toward the region was one in which it maintained and emphasised state to state and party to party relations. This attitude of China coupled with

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22. Kanet, Roger E. "The Soviet Union and Southeast Asia: Prospects for a Soviet Role", Asian Perspective, Fall, 1977, vol.1, no.2, p.115.

23. Ibid., p.118.

24. Das, Parimal Kumar, India and the Vietnam War (New Delhi, 1972), p.77.

the residence of ethnic Chinese in the region, provided China's policy-makers with necessary leverage. In the sixties the PRC was obsessed with the idea that both the Super Powers would accommodate their interests on an international level at its cost, prompted the Chinese policy makers to establish PRC as a strong regional power.<sup>25</sup> From this point of time onward Vietnam and the exercise of influence over the Vietnamese became the bone of contention between the PRC and the USSR. China's relations with Cambodia also were guided by this factor.<sup>26</sup> The situation escalated to such an extent during 1975-80, that it resulted in China's invasion of Vietnam. This was referred to "as the first instance of a proxy war between China and Russia" by the U.S. National Security Adviser Brezzeznski.<sup>27</sup>

The U.S. on the other hand, realised the strategic position of Cambodia as early as 1954 and tried to rope in its leaders into the SEATO. This was partially attained when the Cambodian representative at Geneva Conference demanded that Cambodia should be given the

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25. Morton Halperin, Sino-Soviet Relations and Arms Control (Cambridge, 1967), p.23.
26. For details see, Das, n.24, p.94.
27. Thomas J. Bellons, "Proxy War in Indochina", Asian Affairs, September-October, 1979, p.15.

freedom to seek military help as and when the circumstances warranted. This demand of Sam Sary was conceded by Molotov<sup>28</sup> over the angry protests of Pham Von Dong<sup>28</sup>. The vulnerability of Cambodia in the region was made an issue and the U.S. policy makers blew it out of proportions. The period after the agreement witnessed a vigorous pursuit of the policy of neutrality by Cambodia. The only concern for Sihanouk was to avoid any involvement of the external powers in the domestic affairs. Though he succeeded to a certain extent, the geographical location of Cambodia compelled its leaders to make certain modifications in policies.<sup>29</sup> The question of self-defense, if Cambodia were to be attacked, prompted the Prince to sign an agreement with the U.S. in 1955 and the FRC in 1956. The nature of aid received by Cambodia was mostly in the form of economic and military. The Soviet Union too had aided Cambodia during this period. Between 1955 and 1963, the economic and military aid to Cambodia from U.S. amounted to \$403.7 million.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese on the other

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28. Caldwell & Len Tak, n.18, p.89.

29. For instance as the situation worsened during the war, Sihanouk looked towards the FRC. See, LBS, n.24, p.91.

30. Caldwell, and Len Tak, n.18, p.118.



hand, provided \$228million for industrial development.<sup>31</sup> Having succeeded in taking Cambodia and Sihanouk into confidence, the U.S. adopted all ways and means available, to bring it under S.ATO. But all the moves of the U.S. were rebuffed by Sihanouk who realised that he would be made another Pawn in the U.S. global strategy. One such incident, in which the U.S. tried to coax Sihanouk into the SEATO, resulted in Sihanouk's outright rejection of the idea.<sup>32</sup> Sihanouk's rejection to join SEATO and the puppet regime in South Vietnam provided the Americans with sufficient leverage in the region. Thailand too, took part in these subversive activities with considerable backing from the U.S. Cambodia was told not to use any of the American arms against the Vietnamese or the Thais. Top CIA agents were deputed in South Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia to conduct subversive operations.<sup>33</sup> The U.S. created

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31. Pradhan P.C., Crisis in Cambodia, 1970, M.Phil., dissertation, JNU, pp.24-25.

32. The incident of a mysterious person accompanying Prince Sihanouk was substantially confirmed by Roger Smith, Cambodia's Foreign Policy, pp.93-95. See also, Michael Lelifer, Cambodia: The Search for Security (New York, 1957), p.77.

33. W. Worthy, "The CIA Plot against Cambodia", Reproduced in LeSangKum Revue Politique illustree (September, 1965) Ltd., by Caldwell and Len Tak, n.18, p.103.

such conditions wherein the policy of neutrality pursued by Sihanouk as already mentioned, was made redundant and was pushed over to the Chinese camp.

The PRC on the other hand, perceived Cambodia as a region of 'real importance'. It never wanted Cambodia to divert from its policy of neutrality, as it would have meant a danger to the interests of North Vietnam, as well as its own.<sup>34</sup> Chou En Lai's visit to Cambodia in 1956 and the subsequent visit of Prince Sihanouk to China in 1960, paved way for the signing of the Treaty of friendship and non-aggression. It was signed at a time when South Vietnam was pressing its claims over certain Cambodian territories.<sup>35</sup> While evaluating and assessing the prospects of its relations with the USSR and PRC after the split between the two became obvious (in the early sixties, Cambodia quickly realised the importance of China. China too did not hesitate to pledge its support to Cambodia.<sup>36</sup> But this support to Cambodia was not without any strings. The PRC put forward certain conditions, namely, the use of Sihanoukville

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34. For details, see Das, n.24, pp.70-71 and 89-95.

35. Roger Smith, Cambodia's Foreign Policy, pp.114-19.

36. Caldwell, and Len Tak, n.18, p.108. See also, Wilfred Burrett, Mekong Upstream (Hanoi, 1957), p.160.

and the Parrots Beak areas by the North Vietnamese and the Vietcongs as sanctuaries".<sup>37</sup>

The Sixties which widened the rift between the two communist giants, also witnessed increasing American involvement in the Vietnam war. The U.S. pledged to further the cause of free world, supported the authoritarian regime in South Vietnam, economically and militarily. At the same time, it also encouraged its troops in South Vietnam to invade the Cambodian territories, on the pretext, that Cambodian government was providing sanctuaries for the North Vietnamese. The incursions by the South Vietnamese continued unabated and this threatened the security and territorial integrity of Cambodia.<sup>38</sup> In an attempt to safeguard its interests, Sihanouk even permitted a congressional investigating committee in 1966 to visit Cambodia. This was led by senate majority leader Mike Mansfield. International Control Commission (ICC) was also there to look into the allegations that Cambodia was providing sanctuaries while the Senate Committee categorically stated that there was no trace of Communist bases in Cambodia, the

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37. Das, n.24, p.94.

38. See for a detailed discussion, Caldwell and Len Tak, n.18, Chapter III.

ICC 'accused the United States of aggression and duplicity'.<sup>39</sup> Despite all these reports, Cambodia became a target of the U.S., which used South Vietnam and Thailand to further its interests in the region. The unfolding of events during the Second half of the twentieth century bore a striking similarity with the history of the Indochinese peninsula. If Champa, Annam and Angkor were engaged in constant warfare in the ancient history, it were the South and North Vietnams and Cambodia in the twentieth century. The only difference was that of the involvement of more than one external power.

The Soviet Union, during this period adopted a policy of wait, watch and proceed. In other words, true to its policy of commitment without involvement, the USSR assessed the prospects of an active role in the region. Though it never deployed its forces, like the U.S. in Vietnam, it extended economic support to Democratic Republic of Vietnam.<sup>40</sup> While aiding the DRV militarily and economically, the USSR also influenced the DRV's relations with the PRC.<sup>41</sup> Though, in the Southeast

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39. Malcolm Caldwell, and Len Tak, n.18, pp.148-50.

40. USSR Economic aid amounted to \$100 million during 1955. Evelyn Cohert, n.12, p.352.

41. Robert S. Horn, "Soviet-Vietnamese Relations and the Future of Southeast Asia", Pacific Affairs, Winter, 1978-79, vol.51, no.4, p.587.

Asian region, historically speaking, Soviet Union was conspicuous by its absence, the region acquired importance, initially because of the U.S. involvement and later owing to the PhC's policy towards the region during mid-sixties and the decade of seventies. These developments prompted the USSR to evolve a more effective policy towards Southeast Asia.

The decade of Seventies witnessed a total change in the balance of power in Indochinese peninsula. This was a result of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement at the international level. From 1975 onwards, the events in the region took an unprecedented turn and Vietnam and Kampuchea constituted the 'top table' for the contest between Soviet Union and China.<sup>42</sup> The situation which arose was a result of the American withdrawal from the region after the Paris peace accords in 1973. But the U.S. did more damage than ever, even before the 'Nixon doctrine' was applied in Vietnam. By virtue of this, the U.S. paved way for the Vietnamization of war and gradually withdrew from the region. Prior to the evolution of this face-saving device, the U.S. had already expanded the war over the entire region. They achieved this by

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42. Girling J.L.S., "Politics in Southeast Asia: A Year of Conflict", Southeast Asian Affairs, 1979 (IIEAS, Singapore), p.8.

supporting the Lon Nol government and aiding him militarily and economically.<sup>43</sup> The Lon Nol government carried out systematic execution of the Kampuchean communist cadres. It is rather surprising to note that while the Kampuchean communist cadres drew support from China, their Vietnamese counterparts were persuading them to strike a compromise with the Lon Nol government, after the 1973 Paris agreement. The Vietnamese even went to the extent of reducing 'their arms supply to the Khmer Rouge' as a form of leverage.<sup>44</sup> This presumably was done with an intention not to let the war expand beyond their borders. But this was not to be so as the U.S. with the connivance of the Lon Nol government invaded the Cambodian territories.<sup>45</sup> China on the other hand perceived a major threat to its interests after the U.S. withdrawal and supported the Khmer Rouge, which eventually came to power in 1975.

The idea behind China's continued support to the Khmer revolutionaries was out of the conviction that Vietnam would become a regional challenger to the

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43. See, Caldwell and Len Tak, n.18, Chapter on 'Erosion of Neutrality'.

44. Girling, n.42, p.8.

45. Caldwell and Len Tak, n.18, pp.288 and 297.

Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. The economic and military aid to DRV from China was substantial during 1965-68. It amounted to \$306 million and \$400 million respectively. But after the unification of Vietnam and specially after the Socialist Republic of Vietnam joining ComCon in June 1978, the Chinese curbed all their aid to Vietnam. China played a key role in the escalation of the conflict through its covert and overt support to the barbarous regime of Pol Pot in Kampuchea. But for the PRC's and ASEAN countries' support, the Pol Pot government would have crumbled much earlier. A delegation led by Chou En Lai's widow, in 1978, to persuade the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary clique to put an end to their genocidal policies and also border disputes with Vietnam, proved futile.<sup>46</sup> The border skirmishes continued unabated, and China was publicly criticised for backing Kampuchea. Vietnam, also accused China of harbouring expansionist and hegemonistic ambitions.<sup>47</sup> Besides this the relation between China and the SRV worsened, when the latter launched socialisation programs in the South after the unification of 1976. These programs

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46. Chin Kin Wah, n.2, p.51.

47. Ibid., p.51.

affected the Hoa community, which ethnically belonged to the Chinese origin and was an important economic class. The implementation of these programs resulted in a massive exodus of the Hoa people. This, and the SRV's joining the COMEGON in June 1978, led to the cancellation of 72 Chinese aided projects in Vietnam during 1978. The final blow to China was dealt when the SRV signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR in November 1978. Immediately, after signing the treaty, the SRV launched an offensive against Khmer Rouge by supporting the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation, led by Heng Samrin.

During 1975-80, while Soviet Union and China were concentrating more on Kampuchea and Vietnam. The U.S. started seeking diplomatic support for the Pol Pot regime at the international level. In this attempt, it was very ably supported by China. Though the U.S. did not directly support the Pol Pot regime, the conditions which it created during the Vietnam war, not only led to chaos and destruction, but also to the emergence of the Khmer Rouge.<sup>48</sup> Before the victory

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48. Robert Shaplen, A Turning Wheel (London, 1979), p.4.



of the KNUFNS, the relation between Vietnam and Kampuchea remained as a 'festering sore' in the Sino-Soviet relations. Thus, a region, which had already been 'scarred' and was full of 'bootless' battlefields, again by 1975 became a victim of the conflicting interests of the extra-regional powers.

**THE CONFLICT**

## CHAPTER - III

### THE CONFLICT

The contemporary history of the conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea has two aspects. In the Kampuchean context, it is inextricably linked with its quest for survival as a nation with a national identity. On the other hand, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is committed to eradicate and eliminate the legacies of colonialism and to foil any attempt by the "reactionary" governments to establish direct or indirect control over the region. Both these aspects were strongly emphasised by Vietnam and Kampuchea during 1975-80. This was also one of the reasons which prompted the SRV to help the Pol Pot regime to be overthrown in January 1979. The causes of the conflict date back to the mid-twentieth century.

The day the countries of the region proclaimed themselves independent of France, they were drawn into a conflict which seemed unending. What essentially seemed to be disagreements over border question culminated in the Vietnamese largescale military action in Kampuchea during 1978 December and January, 1979. Hence, the need to examine the situations which led to these disagreements

over the border question. In other words, while the aggravation of these disputes give an appearance of 'new' tensions the "contemporary relations must be viewed against a longstanding background of mutual distrust and animosity".<sup>1</sup> Besides this there have been various other reasons which intensified the rivalries between the Kampucheans and the Vietnamese.

The French, before they formally withdrew from Indochina, created a havoc in the region by deciding to incorporate the Cochin-China region in Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> This decision was taken unilaterally by France. The Cambodians protested against this decision of France and renewed their claim at the 1954 Geneva Conference. Again in 1956, the Cambodian Prime Minister made it clear, that Phnom Pneh still regarded the frontier with South Vietnam as unjust. Since then, South Vietnam and Cambodia disagreed over the demarcations of the borders. This was also the period in which North Vietnam was engaged in a liberation war against the United States. In other words, disputes over the

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1. Gordon, B.K. The Dimensions of Conflict in Southeast Asia (New Jersey, 1960), p.43.
  2. Leifer, Michael. Cambodia and Neutrality (Canberra, 1962), pp.23-24.

borders, between South Vietnam and Cambodia, continued even during the Vietminh's struggle against the U.S. This was a result of the decision taken by Sihanouk to develop the Kompong Som port, which is the only port on Cambodian coast line. This decision was taken because of Sihanouk's apprehensions that the Saigon port would be closed for Cambodian trade activity.<sup>3</sup> Sihanouk also renewed Cambodia's claims for the Phu Quoc island, which is very strategically situated in the Gulf of Siam. South Vietnam, on the other hand, refused to let any of these islands go to Cambodia, and charged that the Phu Quoc island was being used as a base for the Northvietnamese guerilla troops. This particular island and Kompong Som port acquired importance during the period 1975-80. The refusal of South Vietnam to give up its claim over the Phu Quoc island resulted in Sihanouk's raising the issue of Cochin-China again in 1964.

The history of the region played a crucial role in shaping the destinies of Vietnam and Kampuchea. The conflict in the Kampuchean context has been "influenced by the pre-colonial and colonial era history and by the

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3. Gordon, n.1, p.51.

diplomatic position on frontiers that was developed and refined by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and his foreign policy advisors from 1953-70<sup>4</sup>. Kampuchea, evolved a diplomatic strategy regarding the territorial disagreements during the Sihanouk era. Till the prince was overthrown in March, 1970 by Lon Nol, he relentlessly pursued the policy of neutrality but he met with limited success. By then Cambodia had already become a centre of subversive activities. These were carried out by the U.S. in Vietnam.

The political structures which emerged out of the colonial experiences in the region in general, and in Vietnam and Kampuchea in particular, created such a situation wherein the leaders of the countries could not grapple with the problem relating to borders. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, since its independence in 1945, was engaged in a protracted war initially with the French, and at a later stage with the U.S. in order to achieve its objective i.e. unification of South and North Vietnam. It was during this process of unification that the Cambodian borders were used to carry out

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4. Heider, Stephen P. "The Kampuchean-Vietnamese Conflict", Southeast Asian Affairs (ISEAS, Singapore) 1979, p. 15B.

its struggles.<sup>5</sup> It has been rightly brought out by Justus M. Von der Kroef that, this 'military necessity' of North Vietnam 'helped to set the stage for a bitter post-liberation Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict'. Thus, North Vietnam's attempts at realising its objective brought war to Cambodia's door step. This was despite Sihanouk's neutralist policy and by 1970 Cambodia got gradually involved in the war. During 1970-75, the U.S. was actively supporting the Lon Nol government while the latter allowed them to bomb some of the areas under Vietnamese control within the Cambodian territories.<sup>6</sup>

The emergence of the Pol Pot - Leng Sary clique on the Kampuchean scene, on 17 April, 1975, set a new train of events in motion. This was two weeks before the presidential palace of Saigon was captured. Reports of the Kampuchean and Vietnamese involved in a serious fighting were already available by then.<sup>7</sup> This action of Kampuchean Communist Party units not

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5. Justus M. Von der Kroef, Cambodia: From "Democratic Kampuchea" to "Peoples Republic", Asian Survey, vol.XIX, no.8, August, 1979, p.746.

6. This point has been already discussed in Chapter II. P.37

7. Von der Kroef, n.5, p.746.

only threatened the interests of Vietnam alone, but Laos was also threatened. However, the territorial losses which Kampuchea suffered before, define "the attitude to the whole question of negotiation and territorial concessions"<sup>8</sup> of the Kampucheans. More than the actual border problem, the mutual distrust and animosity which both sides nurtured, thwarted any negotiated settlement. The 1967 border agreement which Sihanouk concluded with the South and North Vietnams, did not deal with the ethnic Vietnamese minorities in Kampuchea or the Khmer Krom (approximately one million) settled in the lower Mekong delta of the southern part of Vietnam.<sup>9</sup> Besides, the decision of the U.S. to bombard the communist sanctuaries within the Cambodian territory (during Lon Nol regime) in order to protect its South Vietnamese allies led Sihanouk to denounce the U.S. and 'stigmatise' Vietnamese as 'hereditary enemies'. It is interesting to note, that the Kampuchean policy makers while distrusting the Vietnamese "saw their country's salvation lying in the protection afforded by close friend-

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8. Malcolm Caldwell, "Background to the Conflict in Indochina", Monthly Review, vol.31, no.5, September, 1979, p.8.

9. Sheldon W. Simon, "New Conflict in Indochina", Problems of Communism, vol.27, no.5, September-October 1978, p.22.



ship with China".<sup>10</sup> A reading of the recent political history of Kampuchea illustrates the fact that the PRC - Kampuchean relations were influenced by Soviet Union's attitude towards the NV. Its own national interest coupled with this factor guided the PRC to support the Pol Pot regime and condemn Vietnamese actions in the region.

What initially seemed to be an ordinary disagreement over the borders, acquired more significance after the Khmer Rouge came to power in Kampuchea in 1975. Here, it is essential to examine the Khmer Rouge Revolutionaries' perception of the situation in 1975. About the same time, Vietnam got engaged in its task of socialist reconstruction in the South. The Khmer Rouge, founded in September, 1960, consisted of frustrated leftist intellectuals who disapproved of Prince Sihanouk's action. They accused the prince of reserving the position of responsibility for the old and corrupt people in Cambodia.<sup>11</sup> As early as 1965, during Pol Pot's visit to Vietnam, in his capacity as the First Secretary of the Communist Party

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10. Milton Osborne, Before Kampuchea: A Prelude to Tragedy (Sydney, 1979), p.158.

11. As cited by Frodhan P.C. in Crisis in Cambodia 1970, M.Phil. dissertation, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1974, p.19.

of Kampuchea (KCP), differences with the Vietnamese leaders surfaced. While the Vietnamese leaders wanted the KCP to support Sihanouk's 'external action' and oppose 'internal policies', Pol Pot advocated 'armed struggle'.<sup>12</sup> The Sino-Soviet rift by then had become more obvious. This resulted in China criticising the Vietnamese approach as revisionism and together with Mao and Zhou, Pol Pot agreed that revisionism be eliminated.<sup>13</sup> After the Paris peace accords of 1973, the Vietnamese decided to reduce arms supply to the KCP. This decision of the Vietnamese prompted the KCP "to vow to eliminate the moderating influence of Vietnam".<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the SAV charged the PRC of having helped Cambodia on acquiring arms and ammunition which Cambodia did not have before 1975.<sup>15</sup> But at the same time, Vietnam was waiting to secure its own national interests first, before finally eliminating 'the Cambodian nuisance on its southwest frontiers'. During this

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12. Gareth Porter, "Sino-Vietnamese Conflict in Southeast Asia", Current History, vol.75, no.442, December 1978, p.195.

13. Ibid., p.194.

14. Girling J.L.S., "Politics in Southeast Asia: A Year of Conflict", Southeast Asian Affairs (ISEAS, Singapore), 1979, p.8.

15. Nguyen Manh Hung, "The Sino-Vietnamese Conflict: Power Play Among Communist Neighbours", Asian Survey, vol.19, no.11, November, 1979, p.1047.

period (1975-80) the proclaimed ideological convictions had very little role to play.<sup>16</sup> A study of the 'so called' ideological convictions would reveal that it was only a difference of approach between Sihanouk's Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge's Kampuchea. The policies adopted, resulted from the deep seated fear and apprehensions of the Kampuchean leaders of their neighbours. This is evident in Ieng Sary's statement of 13 June, 1978. "As for the so-called Kampuchea-Vietnam dispute, it can be settled only after its roots are eliminated, for this is not a normal border dispute. It has remained unresolved so far not for want of negotiations. Since 1975, Kampuchea has held many meetings and talks with Vietnam at all levels. However, all these were in vain, for the roots of this problem lie in the fact that Vietnam has the intention of swallowing Kampuchea".<sup>17</sup> It is rather interesting to note that Ieng Sary claimed that Kampuchea has held 'many meetings and talks with Vietnam since 1975' when, till 1977, Kampuchea was a 'diplomatic recluse'.

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16. Nayan Chanda, FER, 19 January, 1979, p.19.

17. Sheldon W.F. Simon, Cambodia: Barbarism in a Small State under Siege, Current History, vol.75, no.442, December, 1978, p.201. Citing from Phnom Penh Domestic Service, 13 June, 1978.

The only instance where Kampuchean leaders held talks with Vietnam, is recorded in June 1975, during the visit of Pol Pot - Ieng Sary to Vietnam. This visit came through after the Kampuchean attacks on Phu Quoc (4 May, 1975) and Tho Chu islands (10 May, 1975). The Kampuchean leaders are on record to have stated that those attacks were due to 'the ignorance of local geography of the Kampuchean'.<sup>18</sup> While apologising for the armed encroachments, they demanded that the Way island be restored to Kampuchea. From that time onwards, any proposals for talks were being postponed.

In August, 1975, Le Duan paid a visit to Kampuchea. Vietnam put forward proposals for cooperation on foreign policy matters, and economic issues. Kampuchea rejected these proposals and went on to issue a Joint Communiqué with China.<sup>19</sup> In 1976, both Vietnam and Kampuchea agreed to follow the last French

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18. Chakravorthy, Nikhil., "Vietnam Vignettes III, A View from Hanoi", Mainstream, 13 January, 1979.

19. Porter, n.12, p.195.

This was during the visit of Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary to Peking, between the 18 and 25 August 1975. Both the sides reiterated the longstanding friendly ties between Kampuchea and the Peoples Republic of China. The Kampuchean delegation also signed an agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation - For details, see Peking Review, no.34, August 22, 1975, pp.6-8.

map of Indochina and the Brevic line to be the basis of determining the sovereignty over islands. This line, drawn in 1939, was meant more for administrative purposes than for demarcation of territory.<sup>20</sup>

The disagreements, thus were over whether the 'same line determines the division of territorial waters'.<sup>21</sup>

Another intriguing aspect of the border disagreements was on the 'precise delineation and demarcation of the land border, the location of which both sides recognised in principle'. The dispute was centered around territorial waters but not offshore islands.<sup>22</sup>

The area of the 'problematic zone was less than 150 km. More than the disagreements over border question, the postures which were adopted by Vietnam and Kampuchea resulted in the escalation of conflict.

The attitude of the countries towards the border issue, was an outcome of the domestic situation in Vietnam and Kampuchea. As, has already been mentioned, Vietnam and Kampuchea were engaged in reconstructing their war-ravaged social and economic structures, in

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20. Caldwell, n.8, p.14.

21. Heider, n.4, p.158.

22. Ibid.

the direction they opted for. There was a fundamental difference in pursuing their goals. Vietnam achieved its first and foremost objective of reunification of its northern and southern territories. While the Kampuchean revolutionaries took the revolution to its logical absurdity during 1975-79. While the SRV expected that Kampuchea would be a friendly neighbour, Pol Pot declared that the 'Mao Zedong thought provided the compass for the Kampuchean revolution',<sup>23</sup> thus dispelling all notions and ideas which Vietnam was till then entertaining. This attitude of the Kampuchean stemmed from the belief that Vietnam would force Kampuchea into a Vietnam dominated Indochinese federation.<sup>24</sup> Vietnam, however, refuted this. The Prime Minister of the SRV, Phan Van Long described this particular charge as 'a fabrication of the agents of Peking'. The SRV also issued a "white paper" on 7 April, 1978, which stated that though the establishment of an Indochina federation was the goal of the Indochina Communist Party founded in 1930, 'the idea had been officially dropped in 1954.'<sup>25</sup> Not only this but the leaders like Pol Pot

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23. Chakravarty, n.18, p.7.

24. Das, Parimal Kumar, Aspects of Conflict in Indo-China, Seminar on Southeast Asian Politics and Foreign Relations: Retrospect and Prospect (School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, March, 1979), p.1.

25. Van der Kroef, n.5, p.746.

Ieng Sary, Khieu Sam Phon, of the Kampuchean revolution who had their education in France in the 1950s "absorbed the atmosphere of hothouse radicalism of the period as well as the doctrines of Marxist professors".<sup>26</sup> They wanted a 'fundamental restructuring of the Cambodian society'. Their victory reflected 'the most radical and harebrained of decolonisation and development'.<sup>27</sup> For the first time in May 1977, the Kampuchean leaders came out of their isolationism. They described the path they embarked upon as "an unprecedented revolutionary exercise which does not follow either the Chinese or Vietnamese model".<sup>28</sup>

The period between 1975-77 witnessed an increase in the border skirmishes. These border skirmishes which continued unabated resulted in the breaking off of all diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea by December 1977. As already mentioned, Cambodia's attacks on Phu Quoc and Tho Chu islands in May 1975 were countered by the SRV on May 25. The SRV drove the Kampuchean forces back and took possession of Han Trae which served the Kampuchean forces as a base. However, in

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26. Ibid., p.746.

27. As quoted by Van der Kroef from Henry Kanar, The New York Times Magazine of 4 February, 1979, p.54.

28. Simon, n.17, citing from L'Espresso of 8 May, 1978, p.199.

August, the SHV withdrew its forces from Han Trae.<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to note that the post-war military aid to the SRV from the Soviet Union showed a phenomenal increase during May 1975 and January 1979. The military aid which coincided with the period during which the SRV launched its retaliatory raids is estimated at about \$255 million.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, both the sides levelled charges against each other. The Vietnamese claimed that the "Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot's direction returned to an isolationist position in 1975 and also that they embarked upon a path of terrorism and destruction of all potential opposition."<sup>31</sup> There is more than an element of truth in the SRV's claim because the obsession with self-sufficiency by the Kampuchean leaders forced them to evolve new strategies. They were to "build a strong agricultural base, supported by local cottage industries and handicrafts on which industries could develop over time."<sup>32</sup> Any opposition to this

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29. Nguyen Manh Hung, n.15, p.1046.

30. Douglas Pike, "The USSR and Vietnam: Into the Swamp", Asian Survey, vol.19, no.12, December 1979, p.1165.

31. Simon, n.9, p.24.

32. Vogelgefang, Sandy, American Dream/Global Nightmare (New York, 1980), p.36.



strategy was dealt with evacuation programs as they were convinced that 'Cities breed counter-revolutions and so the cities should be smashed up and villages alone must survive'. These programs and policies reduced the population to "a mass of disoriented individuals without roots, resources or significant will to resist".<sup>33</sup>

The hatred which the Kampuchean leaders nurtured towards the Vietnamese, resulted in the persecution of ethnic Vietnamese settled in Kampuchea. Thus 'intense nationalism' and 'radical self-reliance' which were the watch words of the Kampuchean revolution, made a compromise with Vietnam virtually impossible. In other words, Kampuchea's hostile policy was a result of "xenophobia of leadership nurtured on a decade of self-sufficiency in the Cambodian country side".<sup>34</sup> The domestic policies of the Kampuchean leaders resulted in the Kampucheans leaving their country in hundreds and thousands. As early as December 1975, the Vietnamese alleged that the Kampucheans were infiltrating their territory through Lai, Quon Tim and Dar Lee provinces.<sup>35</sup> This infiltration was at a stage when Vietnam itself had not attained political and economic stability.

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33. Ibid., p.37.

34. Simon, n.9, p.24.

35. Das, n.24, p.1.

By 29 September 1979, the Democratic Kampuchea attacked Vietnam at more than one point. The DRV charged, that the 'Kampuchean used rockets and 130 mm. China made guns along with aircrafts'. On 30 December, 1977, the Democratic Kampuchea counter charged the SRV of having "infiltrated its army to incite traitors, to destroy the KCP and to create a special state administration that would divide and destroy the Kampuchean Revolution".<sup>36</sup> This led to the killings of 'traitors' in the Kampuchean camps and also proved the fact that if, "Men's lust for power is generated mainly by passion and not by reason, they transform revolution into dictatorship".<sup>37</sup> However, the SRV forces occupied Fishhook (Miwot-Krek) and Parrot's Beak (Svay Rieng) Provinces in December 1977. The idea behind freeing the Svay Rieng province 'besides the areas adjacent to the Vietnamese province of Tay Ninh' was 'to settle the refugees from Cambodia and ~~to~~tain them against the Pol Pot regime.'<sup>38</sup> Hanoi even appealed to all the Kampuchean front line troops to crossover for training as

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36. Simon, n.9, p.24.

37. Morgenthau, Hans J., Scientific Man vs. Power Politics (Chicago, 1946), p.195.

38. Das, n.24, p.1.

'liberation forces to be sent back to Cambodia'. It also accused Phnom Penh of having attempted to seize Phu Quoc and Tho Chu islands in the gulf of Thailand and also of having made incursions into Ha Tien and Tay Ninh provinces. Phnom Penh in its turn charged the SRV of seizure of Poulo Wai island and of having made forays into Rattankiri and Mandolkiri provinces.<sup>39</sup> The KCP also charged the SRV of having, "induced and destroyed the administrative apparatus of the Cambodian people...and installed in their places remnants of the hooligans of the old Cambodian society appointing them as commune and village Chairmen".<sup>40</sup>

Vietnam, on the other hand, launched a diplomatic offensive in 1978. It proposed the following: (a) Resolving of hostilities and withdrawal of both sides' forces by 5 k.m. into their respective territories; (b) A non-interference and non-aggression pledge; and (c) International guarantees and supervision of the agreement.<sup>41</sup> Democratic Kampuchea rejected these proposals as 'deceitful'. It also stated that it would

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39. Vietnamese foreign ministry document distributed by VNA/FBIS, Daily Report/Asia/Pacific, 6 January, 1978, cited in Sheldon W. Simon, n.9.
40. Simon, n.17, p.24. Citing from the statement of the Cambodian information and Propaganda Ministry, Phnom Penh, Domestic Service, 6 January, 1978.
41. Huyn Kim Khann, "Into the Third Indochina War", Southeast Asian Affairs (ISEAS, Singapore) 1980. pp.332-33.

negotiate provided Vietnam stopped hostile activities along the borders.<sup>42</sup> This resulted in Vietnam's rejection of any negotiations with Kampuchea. The postures which both the sides maintained throughout made it extremely difficult for the conflict to be amicably resolved. For the Kampuchean leadership frontiers were 'non-negotiable'. This principle of "non-negotiability of borders required Vietnam's recognition of inviolability, immutability and intagibility of the borders",<sup>43</sup> which the SRV promptly rejected. They thought that the proposals were on a 'leave it or take it basis'. On the other hand, any concession by the Kampuchees was being associated with 'national betrayal'.

The events in the region took a dramatic turn during December, 1978. On 3 December, 1978, Radio Hanoi announced the formation of the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS). The KNUFNS began its military campaign on 25 December, 1978 and marched into Phnom Penh on 7 January 1979, thus bringing the barbaric regime of Pol Pot to an end.

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42. Ibid., p.333.

43. Heider, n.4, p.158.

**THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON VIETNAM-KAMPUCHEA RELATIONS**

## CHAPTER - IV

### THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON VIETNAM-KAMPUCHEA RELATIONS

The relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam during 1975-80, have been marred by intermittent border skirmishes. These culminated in the installation of the Heng Samrin government in Kampuchea on the 9 January, 1979. Interestingly, both the countries experienced 'revolutionary' changes in their economic and political structures in 1975. Having been liberated from the clutches of the U.S. imperialism, Vietnam and Kampuchea formulated their own policies. These policies were based on their understanding of the contemporary international politics. But, in the formulation of these strong nationalistic sentiments prevailed over the common ideological basis these countries supposedly shared.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the apparent cordiality which was reflected in the visits of the leaders of the respective countries proved to be of little or no significance.<sup>2</sup> The differences in the relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea got clearly reflected in the stands taken by them at international levels. In

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1. Tai LungAn, "Turmoil in Indochina: The Vietnam-Cambodia Conflict", Asian Affairs, vol.5, no.4, March-April 1978, p.245.
  2. Immediately after the KCP's victory in 1975, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary paid a visit to Hanoi. This was followed by Le Duan's visit to Phnom Pen in August, 1975. Gareth Porter, "Sino-Vietnamese Conflict in Southeast Asia", Current History, vol.75, no.442, p.194.

other words, while bilateral relations were superficial, the nature of their contradictions was manifested in their attitudes towards China, Soviet Union and other Southeast Asian countries.

After its unification, in April 1976, the DRV formulated a four point policy towards foreign countries.<sup>3</sup> The first point stresses the need to respect independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence with other countries. The second follows from the first i.e. the settlement of disputes among countries through negotiations in a spirit of equality, mutual understanding and respect. The third stresses the "need for cooperation among the countries in the region for building of prosperity in keeping with each country's specific conditions and for the cause of independence, peace and genuine neutrality in Southeast Asia, thereby contributing to the world peace". The last point includes "disallowances of foreign bases in any country for direct or indirect aggression and intervention against the other country or countries of the region".<sup>4</sup>

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3. Carlyle A. Thayer, "Vietnam's External Relations", Pacific Community, vol.IX, no.2, January 1978, pp.220-22.

4. Ibid.

On the other hand, since 1975, the Kampuchean Communist Party, after coming to power pursued an independent policy.<sup>5</sup> Prior to that Cambodia under Sihanouk, vigorously pursued the policy of 'neutrality'. There is a strange coincidence between the policies followed by Sihanouk and the Pol Pot regime. Like any other, Kampuchean foreign policy also consisted of 'a goal, an operating principle and a method'. The only difference between Pol Pot and Sihanouk was the method which they adopted. The underlying theme of the country's foreign policy was the survival of Kampuchea, as an independent entity in the region.<sup>6</sup> However, the pursuit of a neutral policy met with limited success. Whereas the policies adopted by the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique proved disastrous not only to the Kampuchean but also for the entire region.

The evolution of foreign policies of Kampuchea and Vietnam had different bases. The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, actively supported the S'V and Kampuchea, respectively in the pursuit of their policies. The United States on the other hand, played a role

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5. Ibid., p.222.

6. For details see Milton Osborne "Reflections on Cambodian Tragedy", Pacific Community, vol.VIII no.1, April, 1976, p.12, and Sihanouk's speeches cited in Malcolm Caldwell and Len Tak, Cambodia in Southeast Asian War (New York & London, 1973).



which was instrumental in pushing Vietnam into the Soviet Camp.

During 1975-78, attempts at evolving cordial relations were made, both, by Vietnam and Kampuchea. But these attempts proved to be futile. Following the Paris Peace accords on 3 October, 1974, Pol Pot wrote to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party that the victories of the National United Front of Kampuchea cannot be separated from the assistance of their (Vietnamese) brothers and comrades and the people of Vietnam.<sup>7</sup> The FUNK which formed Royal Cambodian Government in exile, was operating from Beijing with Prince Sihanouk as its head. Just as the Kampucheans are suspicious of the Vietnamese, the Vietnamese, in turn, are apprehensive of the Chinese designs in the region. Fear of the Vietnamese drove the Kampuchean leaders to sign an agreement of economic cooperation with the Peoples Republic of China in August, 1975. Khieu Samphan, Secretary of the KCP, also issued a joint communique endorsing China's line on all international issues including an attack on both the superpowers for seeking world hegemony.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Nikhil Chakravorthy, "Vietnam Vignettes III - A View From Hanoi", Mainstream, 13 January 1979, p.7.

8. Usha Mahajani, "Sino-Soviet Conflict and Rivalry in Southeast Asia in the Post-Vietnam Phase", Yearbook of World Affairs, 1978, p.167.

The Vietnamese were worried because of the emerging Sino-U.S. etente in the region. Thus no sooner the Kampuchean revolution took place, there appeared a definite break in the Vietnam-Kampuchea relations. While the Kampuchean leaders moved closer to China, the Vietnamese were left with no other option, but to turn towards the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> This was a result of China's pre-occupation with its designs in the region and the United States' reluctance to normalise relations with the SRV.

The strains in the relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam became more evident during 1975. Kampuchea, along with China boycotted the world congress of women, in East Berlin and also the Twentyfifth Congress of the CPSU in 1976.<sup>10</sup> Vietnam, on the other hand, sent a delegation headed by Le Duan to the twentyfifth Congress of the CPSU.<sup>11</sup> Meantime, China, besides giving aid and diplomatic support to Kampuchea, started publicising its achievements in national reconstruction and development.<sup>12</sup> During this period, the COMCON formulated plans for aid to Vietnam in May 1975. The Soviet leaders praised the SRV and assured them of their support.<sup>13</sup>

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9. Girling, J.L.S., "Politics in Southeast Asia: A Year of Conflict", Southeast Asian Affairs (ISLAS, Singapore, 1979), p.7.

10. Mahajani, n.9, p.168.

11. New Straits Times (Kuala Lumpur) 6 March, 1976.

12. Mahajani, n.9, p.168.

13. New York Times, 8 and 9 May, 1975.

It is rather unfortunate, that the relationship between the two countries worsened because of border conflict. Vietnam and Kampuchea were so preoccupied with the border question, that they could not devote much attention to the task of national reconstruction. In other words, the impact of the conflict hampered the progress and development of both the countries. At the bilateral level, but for exchange of visits of the top leaders, nothing significant marked the relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam. However, border skirmishes continued taking place during this period.

In 1976, after a brief period of isolation, Kampuchea took the first steps towards reconciliation. This was evident from Pol Pot's declaration that 'friendship between both the communist countries was a strategic necessity'.<sup>14</sup> As an immediate response, the SRV supported the charges of Kampuchea with regard to the alleged bombing of Siem Reap by three U.S. Air Force F-111s, on 25 February, 1976.<sup>15</sup> While the U.S. refuted these charges, the Kampucheans and the Chinese denounced the raid of F-111s. Vietnam wanted to evolve a new kind of relationship between the countries belonging to the Indochina region. This is

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14. FEER, Year Book, 1978, p.156.

15. Bangkok Post, 28 February, 1976.

reflected in the S&V's stand on the outcome of the Bali Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held in 1976. It maintained, that consequently a new confrontation in Southeast Asia in the form of Indochina versus the U.S. supported ASEAN had emerged.<sup>16</sup> Vietnam not only wanted to create a feeling of solidarity with Kampuchea but also took some confidence building measures like proposing cooperation at regional level. But all these attempts at reconciliation of interests, proved abortive because of the ever growing complexities of the border problem. In other words, resolution of border disputes became the first prerequisite for cordial relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam.

Though, apparently, both the countries expressed their desire to resolve the conflict amicably, border skirmishes became all usual routine. Pol Pot, during his Peking visit between 28 September and 4 October, 1977, declared that there was absolutely no need for Kampuchea to encroach upon, annex or occupy one inch of land of any country.<sup>17</sup> He also stated that Phnom Penh would not tolerate any aggression, subversion or espionage by any other country. A Vietnamese women's delegation which visited

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16. Bangkok Post, 29 February, 1976.

17. Peking Review, no.41, 7 October 1977, pp.9-12.

Kampuchea in February 1977, was accorded a cold reception, despite the fact that the leader of the delegation thanked Kampuchea for its militant solidarity in the past. While stating the basis of the Kampuchean foreign policy, the Minister for Social Action, Mrs. Ieng Thirith of the Government of Kampuchea pointed out that ties of friendships could be developed by "mutual respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality, mutual-interest, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and non-aggression".<sup>18</sup>

More than the disagreements over the border issue, the attitude and approach of both the countries weighed heavily upon the evolution of an amicable solution. In other words, "the most important ingredient in the Kampuchean-Vietnamese communist conflict 'had been' their differing conceptions of the post-liberation bilateral relations between the two countries."<sup>19</sup> The SRV gave top priority to the development of a 'special relationship' between the Indochinese countries. However, this not too clearly defined 'special relationship' emphasised only

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18. FEER, Annual No. 1978, p. 156.

19. Huynh Kim Khanh "Into the Third Indochina War", Southeast Asian Affairs (ISEAS, Singapore), 1980, p. 331.

two aspects; namely, the common struggle launched by the countries of the region, initially against France and later, against the U.S. The Khmer Rouge leaders rejected this proposal of the SRV, and Pol Pot, Num Chua and Ieng Sary during their visit to Vietnam, in 1977, proposed, instead, a treaty of Friendship. The outcome of their visit had been an agreement to hold a technical conference to discuss the outstanding problems concerning the border.<sup>20</sup> The rejection of the Vietnamese proposal for the development of a 'special relationship' by the Khmer Rouge leaders was due to their suspicion that a common destiny under Hanoi's direction would at best mean "Finlandisation of Kampuchea and Laos".<sup>21</sup>

The technical conference was held in May 1977, in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion of each other's designs in the region. Both the sides agreed, in principle, on the validity of the French drawn land boundary and of the French colonial administrative map. But the solutions which were proposed to resolve the border question were not acceptable to either of the parties. This attitude of the negotiating parties was

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20. Heider, Stephen P. "Kampuchean-Vietnamese Conflict" Southeast Asian Affairs (IS-AS, Singapore) 1979, p.363.

21. Khanh, n.19, p.331.

a direct result of the conflicting national interests. While the Vietnamese proposed mutual readjustments, the Kampucheans steadfastly attempted to maintain the integrity of Cambodia's border.<sup>22</sup> They took a position "that Sihanouk's recompensatory readjustments should not be challenged either by calls for renegotiations or by what the Kampucheans saw as 'defacto' Vietnamese aggression against Kampuchean in the form of military (or civilian) occupation of zones shown on Sihanouk's late 1960s maps as within Kampuchean territory". They also demanded that "Vietnamese forces stay away permanently from old base areas and communication routes, and withdraw from Sihanouk's recompensatory zones in order to improve the climate for subsequent talks".<sup>23</sup>

The SRV on the other hand, stated that withdrawal should be a result of negotiations but not a precondition for negotiations. While both the parties took the above mentioned positions in the discussions on land borders, the question of maritime borders became even more problematic.<sup>24</sup> As observed by Stephen Heider,

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22. See, Chapter II, p. 27.

23. Heider, n.20, p. 163.

24. Ibid., p. 164.

the Vietnamese proposals would have made the Kampuchean regime, "vulnerable to changes of lack of fidelity and ability to protect Kampuchea's national interest". The Kampucheans suspended the talks and subsequently, the high level talks scheduled for June 1977, were cancelled.<sup>25</sup> Even while the conference was on in May 1977, the Khmer Rouge launched a massive military attack along the border.<sup>26</sup> Vietnam during this period was cautious. The SRV, even sent a message to the Central Committee of the KCP on 29 September, 1977 expressing the desire to strengthen friendship with Kampuchea.<sup>27</sup> However, when all these measures failed and when the SRV had no options left, it started taking defensive measures. General Giap took charge of these operations and launched a major offensive into Parrot's Beak; with six divisions supported by tanks, artillery and planes.<sup>28</sup> This resulted in the announcement of Khien Samphan, the suspension of diplomatic relations by the Kampucheans with S. V.<sup>29</sup>

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25. Ibid.

26. Khanh, n.19, p.332.

27. Bangkok Post, 1 October, 1977.

28. Hatcher, Dave., "Cambodia versus Vietnam", FEFR, 13 January, 1979, pp.14-15.

29. Khanh, n.19, p.332.



An examination of the domestic policies formulated by the Kampuchean leaders, at this point becomes very essential. These policies not only hampered and proved detrimental to the development of Kampuchea, but also threatened the national interests of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The policies which were adopted had the support of the People's Republic of China. However, by the time, the PRC realised the cost of supporting the Democratic Kampuchea, it was too late to exercise any effective control over the KCP leaders. Even the visit of Mrs. Chou-en-lai on 18 January, 1978, to persuade the KCP leaders to revert from their policies was of no avail.<sup>30</sup>

True to their commitment to the supposedly 'revolutionary cause' the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique embarked upon a path of unprecedented revolutionary violence. Within twenty-four hours of the Khmer Rouge occupation of Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, the KCP leaders ordered the evacuation of the entire city. This program was to have devastating effects on the Kampuchean society and economy. The idea behind the evacuation program was that in cities 'money and trade have a corrupting influence'. While implementing this particular program the Khmer Rouge did not differentiate between the "bed-

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30. See, Chapter II, p.38.

ridden and ambulatory patients, between the convalescing and the dying".<sup>31</sup> All the citizens regardless of age, sex and occupation were ordered to leave the city. In an attempt to transform the Kampuchean society, the government abolished all forms of private property, money and bank accounts.<sup>32</sup> The libraries of Phnom Penh and Buddhist University were burnt down. School teachers were either incarcerated in concentration camps or interned at other camps.<sup>33</sup> Any person who had served or derived minor or major political, social and economic benefits from the previous regime was purged.

The implementation of these policies resulted in the uprooting of 3.5 million people from the cities and another 300,000 perished during the exodus. Between April 1975 and December 1976, the death toll increased to 1.2 million as a consequence of the actions of the Khmer Rouge Government.<sup>34</sup> All the religious monuments, schools, colleges, anything worth the name were ruthlessly destroyed. By the time the Pol Pot regime was overthrown the population of Kampuchea dwindled by half of what it was in 1975. One of the

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31. Ihon Barron, and Anthony Paul, "Murder of a Gentle-Land", Excerpts in Readers Digest, vol. 110, no. 58, February, 1977, p. 147.

32. Jackson, Karl D., "Cambodia: Gone to Pot", Asian Survey.

33. Barron and Paul, n.31, p.158.

34. Ibid., p.176.

acts of the KCP was to drive the Vietnamese and Chinese commercial classes to take up residence in the countryside agricultural cooperatives.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, Chairman Hua Guo Feng was full of praise for the Kampuchean leaders' experiments at building a new society, when he said "the Kampuchean people freed themselves from the fate of being oppressed and exploited by imperialism and feudalism...the heroic Kampuchean people are not only destroying the old world but are also good at building a new one".<sup>36</sup> These programs which were being implemented by the Khmer Rouge did not surface till the year 1977, as Kampuchea closed its doors to the outside world.

The relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea deteriorated, steadily, despite the fact that the SRV launched a diplomatic offensive in February 1978. On 2 February, 1978, Hanoi issued a declaration on the border question.<sup>37</sup> The year 1978 also happened to be the most crucial one in the escalation of the conflict into a full scale military action by the SRV. Another significant development was the formation of the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUNFS) of an international body

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35. Jackson, n.32, p.71.

36. Peking Review, Excerpts from Chairman Huo Kuo Feng's Speeches, vol.20, no.41, 7 October 1977, pp.6 and 20.

37. See Chapter II, p.57.

for supervision and control. The fears of the Kampuchean leaders were confirmed by the formation of the KNUFNS in the Vietnamese occupied territories. Both sides accused each other of dishonesty. Kampuchean leadership vehemently criticised the Front, and condemned the SHV's designs to bring Kampuchea under a Vietnamese dominated Indochinese federation. Vietnam, however, refuted this charge of the Pol Pot regime.

The installation of the Heng Samrin as the head of the Kampuchean government on 10 January, 1979 changed the entire scenario in the mainland Southeast Asia. In the first place, it rebuffed the Chinese designs in the region. However, after the setting up of the Heng Samrin government "the diplomacy of Hanoi and Phnom Penh revealed two distinct and apparently contradictory themes".<sup>38</sup> While denying any role of the Vietnamese in Kampuchea, the leadership asserted that Heng Samrin regime was established by the Kampuchean people. The Heng Samrin government even denied the presence of Vietnamese troops.<sup>39</sup> However, it was only in July, 1979, that Hun Sen, the Foreign Minister of PRK admitted the presence of the Vietnamese troops and their participation in the establishment of the Heng Samrin Government.<sup>40</sup>

38. Roger Kershaw, "Multipolarity and Cambodian Crisis of Survival: A Preliminary Perspective on 1979", Southeast Asian Affairs (ISAS, Singapore), 1980, p.172.

39. Ibid!

40. FE.R., 22 June, 1979, pp.10-12. Quoting an interview of Hun Sen.

After the installation of the Heng Samrin government, there has been no point where one could draw a line marking the difference between Vietnam and Kampuchea. On 2 December, 1979, KNUFNS affirmed the objectives and ideals set out in its original proclamation of 2 December, 1978,<sup>41</sup> and announced an eight point policy on 1 January, 1979.

The Vietnamese military action in Kampuchea was to have its repercussions in the region. China which had been supporting the Pol Pot regime for strategic reasons, assured all possible help to the Khmer Rouge on 6 November, 1978.<sup>42</sup> This assurance came only three days after the SRV signed a treaty of Friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union. In other words, the USSR won a diplomatic contest over China. The overthrowing of the Pol Pot regime added fuel to the fire. On 7 January, 1979, Beijing issued a statement that "the Chinese government and people are very much concerned about the grave situation Kampuchea faces" and that "the capture of Phnom Penh does not mean the end but the beginning of war".<sup>43</sup> The PRC after having spelt out

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41. Kershaw, n.38. Cited from FBIS 4, December 1978 and 8 January 1979.

42. Indian Express (New Delhi) 7 November, 1978. Quoting from Xinhua agency.

43. Herbert S. Yee, "The Sino-Vietnamese Border War: China's Motives, Calculations and Strategies", China Report (1) January-February 1980, p.21.

its intention launched a major military offensive along the borders. This 'punitive action' of the PRC was apparently to teach the 'Vietnamese a lesson'. However, the one and only objective of the PRC was to divert the Vietnamese troops and to keep them bogged down in a quagmire in Kampuchea.<sup>44</sup>

It is rather unfortunate that Vietnam which had been the symbol of revolutionary patriotism in the world, was forced into a situation where it had to intervene in Kampuchea. A country which had fought against imperialism for over a thousand years, is being accused of having tried to establish hegemonism! On the other hand, Kampuchea's history 'is hinged with tragedy' and 'a terrible war and subsequently a terrible peace took a staggering toll'.

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44. Ibid., P. 17.

## CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

A study of the relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea during 1975-80 is multi-dimensional. In the ancient period, both Vietnam and Kampuchea were subjected to the influence of the Chinese and Indian cultures, respectively. Interestingly, the Kingdoms and the Empires, which existed, while accepting the alien cultural patterns, preserved at the same time, the native socio-cultural patterns. This is a major section of the society retained its distinct cultural identity. The Chinese domination of the Vietnamese for over a thousand years did little to destroy the societal structure. In the same manner, the Indian influences were restricted to the court culture, thus, leaving a majority of natives untouched.

The nineteenth century witnessed the region torn between the warring factions over the question of who would rule Kampuchea. It was also during this century that France emerged as a colonial power. Like any other imperialist country, France took advantage of the conflict between the Vietnamese and the Khmers. In the French colonial designs, Indochina was to serve as a link with China for their trade and commercial interests. But French designs were upset and it had to be content



with the occupation of Cochin China, Jontsin, Annam, Cambodia and Laos. The French colonial policies in the region, provided the needed impetus for the rise of nationalism. Another important dimension to the relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam during this period can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century, in their struggle against French colonialism. The strong nationalist sentiments which were exhibited by the natives of the region left their legacies behind. These legacies were carried forward by the leaders of the National movements in the region.

After having emerged victorious against the French imperialism, the Vietnamese were grounded to dust by the Great Powers. The 1954 Geneva Conference added another dimension to the conflict in Indochina. The demarcation of territories by the French proved to be very crucial. The countries which emerged independent had no clear-cut demarcation of their territories. The division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel brought to surface the conflict between the two diametrically opposed political systems. Meanwhile, Cambodia was strongly staking its claims over the territories which were lost during the course of history. Following the Second World War, the division of the

world took place between the two power blocs. The rivalry between the Socialist and the Capitalist blocs began to have its repercussions in the region. The geo-political situation of the countries was exploited by all the major powers. The United States' primary aim was to contain the spread of communism as it perceived China to be a major threat in this respect to the Southeast Asian region. On the other hand, the PRC's ambition to become a regional power and create its own sphere of influence, were the major factors which influenced the Chinese policy in the area. The split in the Socialist bloc, too weighed heavily in the PRC's calculations. During this period, the Soviet Union followed a policy of 'peaceful co-existence', in keeping with its foreign policy objectives.

By 1954, four independent states with different divergent political structures, emerged. Subsequently, the disagreements over the borders between Cambodia and South Vietnam surfaced.

With the United States' involvement in the region, the scenario changed entirely. While supporting the South Vietnam Government economically, militarily and politically the U.S. also attempted to destabilise the Cambodian Government. It should be noted here that,

Cambodia was pursuing its policy of 'neutrality' under Prince Sihanouk. Though the pursuit of this policy was met with limited success, Cambodia at that particular point of time, was left with no other option. The increasing U.S. involvement in the internal affairs of South Vietnam resulted in the intensification of the Vietnam war and consequently, spilling all over the region. This also drew Cambodia on to the scene. This marked the beginning of the violation of borders of Cambodia by the South Vietnamese soldiers. These incursions were made on the pretext that Cambodia was providing sanctuaries to the North Vietnamese. However, in 1967, Sihanouk concluded an agreement with North and South Vietnam over the borders question. It was agreed upon, that all the three countries would recognise the Brevie line (1939) to be the demarcating line. With the escalation of the Vietnam war this agreement was made redundant.

By 1970, the events in the region took a definite turn. Prince Sihanouk was deposed by Lon Nol the same year in March. This marked the growing influence of the United States on the countries belonging to the Indochinese region. However, the enunciation of the Nixon doctrine and the Paris peace accords of 1973 resulted in the gro-

dual withdrawal of the United States forces in the region. But, the People's Republic of China promptly stepped into the shoes of the U.S. Though in an entirely different situation, the Chinese role in the region proved to be a major factor in the escalation of conflict in Indochina and influenced the relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea. In the wake of Sino-Soviet-rivalry, the entire Chinese policy was geared towards creating a sphere of influence in the Southeast Asian region. Indochina, because of its geographical propinquity, assumed paramount importance. In fact, China's attempts at extending its influence over the region can be traced back to the early sixties. But the Vietnamese, as cautious as ever, and keeping in view their own national interests rebuffed all such attempts. But Kampuchea on the other hand came under Chinese influence. This was especially after the overthrow of Sihanouk in 1970. Thus a duality in the PRC's policies towards the region was noticeable. While supporting the Vietnamese revolutionary cause, it also helped the Kampuchean communist party to launch a struggle against Lon Nol. This duality had very bad repercussions on the relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea during 1975-80.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was very cautious in evolving its policy towards the Southeast Asian countries, and particularly, the Indochinese countries.

In an attempt to curb the influence of the U.S. and the PRC, it increased its diplomatic and material support to North Vietnam during the war period. In the beginning the economic and military aid which was offered by them to the North Vietnamese, was not that substantial. But during the later part of the Vietnam war, Soviet military and economic aid increased manifold. After the fall of Saigon in March, 1975, and the unification of Vietnam in April 1976, the USSR got further involved in the reconstruction work of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The relation between the SRV and the USSR proved to be of crucial significance and affected the relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam during 1975-80.

The year of 1975 heralded a new era in the politics of the Indochina region. Both Vietnam and Kampuchea transformed their political systems into communist political systems. However, there was a striking dissimilarity between these two transformation. In other words, the 'revolutions' which werebrought about in the region had their own logic. While the Vietnamese revolutionaries claimed to have achieved their first and foremost objective of uniting both the parts, the Kampuchean revolutionaries claimed to have salvaged the prestige of kampuchea. Thus both the countries emphasised the spirit of nationalism.

But, the Kampucheans took this spirit to its logical extremes which proved disastrous, not only for Kampuchea, but also for the Vietnamese. The Chinese factor too weighed heavily in the Vietnamese calculations. Because, China viewed Vietnam to be a regional challenger. Though, the PRC hailed the victory of the Vietnamese it extended its support to the regime of Pol Pot in Kampuchea.

The year 1975 also witnessed the starting of the border skirmishes between Kampuchea and Vietnam. The Pol Pot regime, after having been assured of both political and military support by China, continued to launch raids along the borders and offshore islands. Thus, whatever possibility of evolving cordial relations between Vietnam and Kampuchea was there, got lost. The PRC egged Kampuchea on to opt for a policy of confrontation with Vietnam. On the other hand, the SRV, in order to divert its resources to the reconstruction of its war ravaged economy and society, was resorting to diplomatic measures. However, all these exercises proved to be futile.

As the border skirmishes increased (with the tacit encouragement of the Chinese to the Kampucheans) the security of the SRV began to be threatened. The economy was under severe strain as a result of the influx of the refugees from Kampuchea. This had a telling effect on the Vietnamese

decision in the region. The economic distress was further aggravated by the Chinese decision to cancel all its economic aid by 1978. Besides, when the attempts at normalisation of relations with the U.S. failed, the SRV had no other option but to turn toward the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The SRV's joining the COMECON in June 1978 proved to be a serious setback to the Chinese calculations. In order to safeguard its security interests in the region, the SRV also signed a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation with the USSR in the same year. This action of the SRV was to neutralise China's manoeuvrability in Indo-China. After signing the treaty with Soviet Union, it lent its military and political support to KNUFNS formed on 2 December, 1978. On the Christmas Day, the KNUFNS launched the liberation struggle which came to an end by the 7 January, 1979 with the capture of Phnom Penh.

The blitzkrieg stunned the countries of the region to silence, initially. But the Chinese lost no time in making their intentions clear. They invaded Vietnam, to teach the Vietnamese a lesson. The ASEAN Group of countries too condemned the SRV's action as well as the Chinese. Major diplomatic offenses were launched at the regional, as well as, the international level. While try-

ing to seek justification for the continuance of the Pol Pot regime, the U.S., China and the ASEAN Group of countries, very conveniently overlooked the atrocities committed by the Pol Pot regime.

Another interesting aspect which gained prominence during 1975-80 in the region, was the strong nationalist sentiments expressed by both the countries. Suspicious of the Vietnamese, the Kampuchean leaders, time and again, harped upon the tune, that the Kampuchean territorial integrity was being threatened by the Vietnamese. This resulted in the systematic persecution of all those inhabitants who were of Vietnamese origin. Even the communist leaders and workers, who were trained in Vietnam were not spared.

To conclude, one would like to state that the multi-dimensionality of the relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam was the most crucial factor in the Vietnamese military action in Kampuchea. While Vietnam is justified in overthrowing the genocidal regime of Pol Pot, its continued presence in Kampuchea is not in the best interests of the region or to Vietnam. Because, continued presence of the Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea would mean a lot of strain on the Vietnamese economy which it can ill afford. Not only this, it might also give vent to the anti-Vietnamese feelings of the Kampuchean. Especially with



China manipulating around the frontiers, it might prove detrimental to the Vietnamese national interests. Continued stationing of the troops in Kampuchea have also created international complications for Vietnam. Vietnam should live upto its reputation as a land of great revolutionary patriots, that their glorious liberation struggles have earned for them. While the Vietnamese offers to withdraw their troops from Kampuchea are praiseworthy, these do not appear to have satisfied either the rival faction headed by Sihanouk, or the ASEAN Group of Nations.

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**Statesman**

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## APPENDICES

# NEW Stage in Kampuchea

Happenings of major importance are reported from Kampuchea. *Saporamean Kampuchea*, the official news-agency of the newly established Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation has recently reported that a Congress was held inside Kampuchea of representatives from different regions which have thrown off the yoke of the present regime at Pnom Penh.

The *Saporamean Kampuchea*, describing the formation of the Front as "an event of great historic importance", reports: "Participating in the Congress were more than 200 representatives of all strata of the Kampuchean patriotic population: workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, Buddhist monks and nuns, young people, women, Kampuchean ethnic minorities, patriotic insurgents who had abandoned the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary administration and army.

"The Congress reviewed the situation in Kampuchea over recent years under the dictatorial and militarist regime of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang and unanimously decided to found the Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation. It unanimously adopted the declaration of the Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation about the tasks and objectives of the Kampuchean revolution and the 11 directives of the Front. It called on the Kampuchean people to unite and rise up to overthrow the reactionary and nepotist gang and Pol Pot-Ieng Sary to build a peaceful, independent, democratic, neutral, and non-aligned Kampuchea advancing to Socialism.

"The Congress called on peoples and Governments, international organisations, mass organisations and democratic organisations throughout the world struggling for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress, to give the Kampuchean people's just struggle active support and assistance in all fields.

"The Congress unanimously adopted as official flag of the Front, the Red Flag with Five Golden Towers in the middle."

The Congress elected the 14-member Central Committee of the Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation with Heng Samrin, former member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea for the Eastern Region, as President; Chea Sim, former Secretary of the Party Committee for Region 20, as Vice-President, and Ros Samay, Deputy-chief-of Staff of the Kampuchean Revolutionary Armed Forces, as Secretary-General. Heng Samrin, President of the Central Committee of the Front, on behalf of the Committee, formally handed the Front's Flag to the representatives of the Kampuchea Revolutionary Armed Forces. Representatives of the people and the Kampuchean Revolutionary Armed Forces expressed their confidence in the leadership of the Front and pledged to unite in the struggle and to correctly implement the Front's directives with a view to taking the Kampuchean revolution forward to total victory.

As the Declaration of the Front has not been adequately reported in the Indian press, its complete text is published herebelow — *Editor*

## Declaration of Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation

**D**EAR and respected compatriots!  
Dear cadres and combatants!  
Dear compatriots abroad!

Throughout the long period when Kampuchea was under the yoke of colonialism, imperialism and feudalism, how many of our compatriots, cadres and combatants have developed our forefathers' glorious tradition, and, despite innumerable difficulties and sacrifices, they have relentlessly struggled with sublime heroism against French and US imperialism with a view to restoring independence and freedom for the country, thus glorifying our magnificent land of Angkor.

Particularly during our patriotic war against US imperialism, while relying on our own forces and at the same time enjoying the sympathy, support and assistance of Socialist countries and peace and justice-loving people the world over, our people won the glorious victory of April 17, 1975, totally liberating our country, opening for the Kampuchean

people a new era, the era of independence, freedom and socialism.

Following the restoration of our total independence, our people could have enjoyed peace, devoted might and main to national reconstruction, and established relations of countries loving peace, independence and freedom in South-east Asia and the world as a whole.

However, during the past three years, things have happened in a completely opposite way. A dictatorial, militarist, and fascist regime, matchless in history for its ferocity, has been installed in Kampuchea. The reactionary Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang and their families have totally usurped power, sought by all means to betray the country and harm the people, causing innumerable sufferings and mournings to our fellow Kampuchean, and threatening our people with extermination. It is the Chinese authorities who have encouraged and backed to the hilt these traitors and tyrants.

Only a few days after liberation, under the sign-

board "all-round, radical social revolution", and "social purification", they razed the towns and forced millions of people in cities and urban centres to leave, their homes and property for the countryside to lead a precarious life and die slowly through hard labour.

They have cut all sacred sentiments of people toward their parents, between brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, and even among neighbours. In fact, they have razed village where our people had lived and woven sentimental ties for thousands of years.

They proclaim "forcible cooperativisation", "abolition of money and markets" and force people to eat in community. In fact, they have herded our compatriots into camouflaged concentration camps, robbed our people of all means of production and consumer goods, forced them to overwork while giving them the minimum of food and clothes, forcing all strata of the population to live in misery as slaves. They classify people into different categories with a view to subduing them more easily and to making them kill one another.

Decidedly the crimes of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang, can no longer be counted! Everywhere our people have witnessed massacres more atrocious, more barbarous than those committed in the middle age or perpetrated by the Hitlerite fascists.

They have even declared that they would not hesitate if they had to sacrifice millions of our compatriots for the sake of building socialism the way they chose. In many places they have massacred the people in whole villages and whole hamlets. They spare not even foetuses inside mothers' wombs! Worse still, they intend to massacre more than 1,700,000 people in the Eastern region. In the face of this situation, the people have risen up against them, tens of thousands of people whose lives are threatened, have been forced to leave the motherland for abroad. Those who stay back in the country live in constant fear — like fish caught in a net not knowing when their turn will come to be massacred.

The Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang have usurped the leadership of the party and have forgotten all that the revolutionary people have done to feed and protect them. Right after seizing the top level of power, they paid back with tortures, and murders! They have betrayed their compatriots and their comrades. How many cadres, party members, authentic revolutionaries and patriots, and cadres and combatants in the armed forces who had contributed to the liberation of the country and had proved absolute loyalty to the motherland have been killed *en masse* at all levels and in all places for the only reason that they did not approve the reactionary and barbarous policy of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang:

They have trampled underfoot all traditions, all fine customs and habits of our people, and have committed acts of vandalism against our nation's time-honoured culture. They have banned freedom of religion, organised forced collective marriages, dislocated families, and debased our nation's habit and customs.

They have destroyed pagodas and temples of Bud-

dhism, ancient state religion of Kampuchea, and have forced monks and nuns to return to laic life. They have destroyed Hinduism while exterminating the Champa nationality. They have razed almost all education establishments from primary schools to university. They have forced all children of 13-14 to give up studies and enrol in the army to serve their interests!

The Pol Pot-Ieng Sary regime is a regime of new-type enslavement and has nothing to do with socialism!

To camouflage their abominable crimes against our people and fool public opinion at home and abroad, to serve their dark design of building a barbarous dictatorial and militarist regime ready to kill all those who refuse to submit to them, and to serve the strategic aims of great nation expansionism of the Chinese authorities, they have provoked a border conflict with Vietnam, thus turning friend into foe. They have transformed our revolutionary armed forces into mercenaries for the Chinese authorities, and into a tool to suppress the people's uprising movement.

*Respected compatriots!*

*Dear cadres and combatants!*

*Dear fellow Kampuchean living abroad!*

The Pol Pot and Ieng Sary traitors and tyrants have drowned Kampuchea in blood and tears. Boiling with anger against these barbarous acts and this policy of betrayal toward the country and people, the authentic revolutionary and patriotic forces have risen up alongside the people throughout the country to struggle resolutely against these traitors to save our country and people from slavery and extermination.

The newly founded Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation solemnly declares:

The Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation, established in the spirit of authentic independence of the Kampuchean people, unites all nationalities in the country, and rallies all patriotic forces regardless of political and religious tendencies — workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, Buddhist monks and nuns, patriots still in the ranks of the ruling clique, and compatriots now living abroad — and without distinction of age or sex, to realise of one mind the immediate revolutionary task of the Kampuchean people:

To unite the entire people and rise up to topple the reactionary and nepotic Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang of militarist dictators, henchmen of foreign reactionary forces, to liquidate their barbarous and blood-thirsty regime — to establish a people's democratic regime, to develop the Angkor traditions, to make Kampuchea a really peaceful, democratic, neutral, and non-aligned country advancing to Socialism, thus contributing actively to the common struggle for peace and stability in South-east Asia.

To fulfil this historic mission, the Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation undertakes:

(1) To carry out a policy of great national union, and overthrow the dictatorial, militarist and nepotic

regime of the reactionary Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique. To dissolve the People's Representatives Assembly created by Pol Pot-Ieng Sary. To hold general elections to a National Assembly, to reorganise a people's democratic power at all levels, to work out a new constitution guaranteeing the people's rights to equality, to real freedom and democracy, and to establish the legislation of an independent, democratic state advancing to Socialism.

(2) To build revolutionary mass organizations of Kampuchea affiliated to the Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation with a view to grouping various strata of the population, help them to see through the anti-national and anti-popular nature of the reactionary Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang, so that they will abandon all organisations and groups set up by this gang, and actively adhere to the Youth Association for National Salvation, the Women's Association for National Salvation, the Trade Union for National Salvation, the Peasants' Association for National Salvation, and the Intellectuals' Association for National Salvation, with a view to toppling the reactionary and nepotist Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang and bringing to all strata of our people the right to be the real Masters of the country.

(3) To build and develop the Kampuchean revolutionary army which, together with the people, have the task of crushing the reactionary Pol Pot-Ieng Sary administration, defending the revolutionary power, the people's lives and property, defending the motherland ever more efficaciously, firmly maintaining independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kampuchea.

(4) To realise the people's rights to real freedom and democracy and respect their dignity. All Kampucheans have the right to return to their old native land, and to build their family life in happiness. All Kampucheans have freedom of residence, movement, association, and religion, and have the right to work recreation and education. To guarantee freedom of person. All ethnic groups in the Kampuchean social community have the right to freedom, equality, and share the same rights and duties.

(5) To carry out an independent and sovereign economic policy tending toward genuine Socialism. To rebuild our war-torn country to restore the national economy ravaged by the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary regime. The new economy shall serve the people's interests on the basis of agricultural and industrial development. It will be a planned economy with markets, meeting the needs for progress of society.

To abolish the compulsory "work-and-eat-together" system, and to put an end to the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary policy of seizing the people's rice and other property. To assist and encourage mutual-aid and cooperative forms on the basis of the peasants' voluntariness in order to boost production and improve the people's living standards.

To establish banks, issue currency, restore and develop the circulation of goods. To broaden the home trade and increase economic relations with all foreign countries on equal footing and with mutual benefits.

To abolish the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary policy of back-breaking labour. To carry out the policy of eight-

hour work day and pay according to labour.

(6) To abolish compulsory marriage, and encourage free choice in marriage, and restore the happy life of every family. To realise sex equality and create all favourable condition for women to get education and improve their trades in order to serve society like men.

To care for war invalids families of war dead, and families which have rendered good services to the revolution.

To care for the people's health, aged and infirm people and orphans.

To care for and defend the legitimate interests of oversea Kampucheans. To have a correct policy toward foreign residents in Kampuchea.

(7) To abolish the reactionary culture of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang. To build the new culture with a national and popular character. To do away with illiteracy, develop the general-education schools, universities and secondary vocational colleges. To give the right place to cultural workers, artists and others and women of culture.

To protect and restore historical relics, pagodas and temples, and parks destroyed by the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang.

(8) To warmly welcome and create favourable conditions for officers and soldiers, as well as public servants in the administration of the reactionary regime to rally with the people and fight back against the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang to save the motherland and their own families.

To duly punish die-hard reactionary chieftains who have committed bloody crimes against the people. To practise leniency toward those who sincerely repent. To give appropriate rewards to those with deaths of arms in service of the revolution.

(9) To carry out a foreign policy of peace, friendship and non-alignment toward all countries without distinction about their political and social systems, and on the basis of peaceful co-existence, respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit.

(10) To settle all disputes with neighbour countries through peaceful negotiations, and on the basis of respecting each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. To put an end to the border war with Vietnam provoked by the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang. To restore the relations of friendship, cooperation and good neighbourhood with other South-east Asian countries, and contribute to building South-east Asia into a region of peace, independence, freedom, neutrality, stability and prosperity. Kampuchea will not join any military alliance nor allow any country to build military bases on its territory or send military equipment into Kampuchea.

(11) To strengthen solidarity with all revolutionary

and progressive forces throughout the world. To firmly support the common struggle of all nations for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress, against imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism.

*Dear and respected compatriots!*

*Dear cadres and combatants!*

*Dear compatriots abroad!*

Our nation is facing the danger of extermination! Our motherland is in danger! Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation calls on:

All fellow Kampuchean of all nationalities, and all walks of life including those living abroad, old and young, men and women, regardless of political tendencies and religious beliefs, to close their ranks under the banner of the Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation and rise up millions as one to overthrow the dictatorial, militarist and genocidal regime headed by the nepotist and bloodthirsty Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang.

This is the only way to save our people, our country and ourselves.

By this way we can bring peace and genuine independence to our country, and freedom, real democracy and happiness to our people.

Cadres, public employees and combatants still entangled in the administration and army machinery of the reactionary Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang! Rise up against every traitorous undertaking and policy of this gang, take an effective part in the just struggle of our people, destroy the leading torturers, turn into genuine revolutionary armed forces of the people.

The Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation earnestly calls on the peoples

and Governments of all countries, international organisations, mass organisations and democratic organisations throughout the world struggling for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress to give our people's just struggle active support and assistance in all fields.

The reactionary regime, barbarous as it is, is shaking to its roots and is doomed to total collapse.

In the present epoch no international reactionary force, however perfidious it may be, can exterminate the heroic Kampuchean people.

The genuine Kampuchean revolutionary forces, still have to overcome numerous difficulties and hardships. But they have a correct revolutionary line and fight for a goal in accordance with the sacred aspiration of the nation and with the trend of history. They are solidly united millions as one and enjoy the sympathy and support of the peoples who love peace, justice and social progress. They will win glorious victory.

The time of the revolution has come!

Cadres and combatants, unite and march forward heroically!

Struggle resolutely to overthrow the reactionary Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang!

Our people will surely achieve a peaceful, independent democratic, neutral, and nonaligned Kampuchea which will advance to Socialism!

The Kampuchean revolution will win!

— The Central Committee of the Kampuchea National United Front for National Salvation

Kampuchean Liberated Zone, December 3, 1978 □